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Patricia A. Callahan

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THE READER OF MILTON'S "HIGHER ARGUMENT" IN PARADISE LOST

A Dissertation

Submitted to McAnulty College and Graduate School  
of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Patricia A. Callahan

May 2009

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Patricia A. Callahan

2009

THE READER OF MILTON'S "HIGHER ARGUMENT" IN PARADISE LOST

By

Patricia A. Callahan

Approved March 20, 2009

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# ABSTRACT

## THE READER OF MILTON'S "HIGHER ARGUMENT" IN PARADISE LOST

By

Patricia A. Callahan

May 2009

Dissertation Supervised by Professor Albert C. Labriola

Milton has a literary place within the Christian understanding of grace, entangles his reader into Paradise Lost, and embeds a "higher Argument" of an economics of salvation of grace within the text which thus forms a transcendent reader who responds by a choice for the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of mammon. Paradise Lost as a tertiary stage in epic development maintains a grand style, but modern critics have problems with Milton's God. Autobiographical elements in The Reason of Church-Government indicate Milton's sense of a divine calling in poetry, but Professors Grierson and Tillyard disagree regarding Milton's prophetic powers in Paradise Lost, while William Kerrigan, Joseph Wittreich, John S. Hill, and Michael Lieb recognize a sacred calling and elements of the sacred in Milton's epic.

Subsequently, I trace the shifting nuances of grace and follow its development through six historical periods that cover (1) the Old Testament, (2) the New Testament,

(3) post-Apostolic Period, (4) Patristic, (5) Scholastic eras, and (6) the Arminian heresy and the De Auxiliis controversy in the seventeenth century. John Milton, influenced by St. Augustine, contributes to the grace conversation through Paradise Lost.

Five topics concern the transcendent reader: (1) the philosophical shift that occurs in modern philosophy, theology, and later in literary criticism with “the turn toward the subject” anticipated by Milton; (2) reader response theory that develops as a result of the philosophical interest in the subject; (3) PL as an epic experienced as drama enacted within a reader’s mind; (4) the possibility that PL becomes a reflection for a reader to consider grace, responsibility, and salvation; (5) the “higher argument” of PL that includes the economics of grace and salvation. To situate Milton as a theologian, I mark the importance of Christian Doctrine and its relationship to PL, review the qualities of the Puritan sermon that Milton incorporates into PL, and note Milton’s debt to Puritan homilists. Finally, I look into biblical economics and how Milton integrates the economics of grace into his “higher Argument.”

## DEDICATION

With gratitude I dedicate this dissertation to all believers in education as a life-long pursuit—family, friends, colleagues, and professors—who encouraged me to find in the past the foundation of the present. For all yearning to do something similar: come to the University where the journey challenges but gives understanding, insight, meaning, and perhaps wisdom to face reality.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is the place . . . in which the intellect may safely range and speculate, sure to find its equal in some antagonist activity, and its judge in the tribunal of truth. It is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge.

J. H. Cardinal Newman, The Idea of a University

My interest in John Milton turned significantly in 1993 when I applied to Dr. Albert Labriola's NEH second summer seminar "Paradise Lost (PL) and the Contemporary Reader." I feared Milton since I was ill-prepared for a first reading of PL years before and wanted to overcome my anxiety about him. Two reasons therefore motivated my application for this particular seminar offered for high school teachers. I first wanted to understand the epic as a Christian but Protestant text, to know more about its classical and Renaissance antecedents, and to supplement my deficiencies about the English Revolution. Second, in overcoming my problems with PL perhaps I would be a better teacher for my secondary students who could face similar problems. That NEH seminar changed my intellectual focus.

So enriching was the seminar that I applied the following year for a grant from the Council for Basic Education to study Milton's PL along with his Christian Doctrine (CD). Dr. Labriola, the English Department, and Duquesne University offered me their resources to investigate the relationship of the two texts. During that summer's study my interest in reader response to PL increased theoretically and practically as I read through CD. Both texts led me to question a person's relationship to the Divine as defined by Milton. I also read Stanley Fish's Surprised by Sin wherein he argues that readers caught



up in the text respond with “wayward, fallen responses” that either the narrator or a divine character in the epic reproves or corrects. In their responses, readers, too, are caught in the web of evil Satan spins for Adam and Eve. However, I also asked—could the reader just as easily be surprised by grace, the divine counter attack to Satan’s machinations, as well as sin, since PL also dwells on this happy event? I discovered that reader-response criticism opened up the epic to the contemporary reader working within an interpretative community such as Duquesne’s English Department and offered a possible means to resolve the sin-grace question.

As a result of a wager struck with my principal prior to Dr. Labriola’s seminar, my private high school bought me a set of PL paperbacks for a trial class in the epic. I experimentally taught PL during the 1994 spring semester to an honors class of sophomore boys who read more than the brief excerpts offered in AP or Senior English. The following year, the students demanded that more than one class read Milton. Until I left Southern California in 1998, I offered Paradise Lost to two classes of sophomore boys. Although the less advanced class did not progress as quickly through the text as honor students, their responses to a questionnaire indicated that reading PL also made classes in Scripture and church history more meaningful to both groups. My little experiment in reading Milton with these classes offered insight into reader-responses, especially questions posed by students about sin, grace, and man’s relationship to the Divine, but it also taught me the value and need of a classical background for understanding an epic.

When the English Department of Duquesne University accepted me into their Ph.D program, both the Department and Dr. Labriola permitted and encouraged me to

take a detour through the Classics Department to learn about the epic by studying Greek and Latin. I am indebted to my four years with the Classics Department, Dr. Larry Gaichas, Dr. Stephen Newmyer, Dr. Jerry Clack, and Dr. Ann Wilkins, for the opportunity to learn the grammar necessary to read Greek and Roman epics and myths in their original languages and to discover the classical foundation of the epic. Dr. Gaichas gave me a foundation in Latin grammar and the encouragement to pursue additional study in Latin and Greek. The course on the Epic Journey by Dr. Wilkins first suggested the correlation to me between the classical epic and the epic journey each of us writes with our lives, often leaving its presence inscribed in some way on our bodies. Both Dr. Stephen Newmyer's lectures on mythology, Ovid, and Seneca and Dr. Clack's lectures on Roman history and Greek drama, Vergil, and Euripides opened classical allusions in PL to many levels of comparisons and meaning that I would not have had without their instruction.

I am most grateful to Duquesne University, to the English Department of McAnulty College, and to its Professors who taught and honored the great literary tradition of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth. My appreciation extends especially to Dr. Albert Labriola, chairman of my committee, who introduced me to Milton scholarship with his NEH seminar, supervised my work for CBE, and encouraged me through grave illness, to Dr. Bernard Beranek, my first reader, who supported my forays into classical studies, and to Dr. Anne Brannen, my second reader, who connected Chaucer horizontally and vertically to the period before and the periods after him, particularly the Renaissance, and shared the wisdom of medieval spirituality with her students. I value three additional members of the English Department: Dr

Frederick Newberry let me roam among colonial Americans in search of Milton's influence in early America and especially the Founding Fathers; Dr. Daniel Watkins made literary theory integral to the study of literature and taught me to value not only what is in a text but also what is excluded; Dr. Linda Kinnahan made Modernism more than a literary period, changing my understanding of economics from a required undergraduate course to a point of view for interpreting and understanding literature across the centuries.

When three periods of illness forced me to take leaves of absence from the program, Professors throughout the English and the Classics Departments offered compassion, hope, and encouragement. Additionally, two graduate friends, Jessica Jost-Costanzo and Ryan Costanzo, enabled me to persevere in the program prior to surgery and through months of chemotherapy. The education, scholarship, friendship, and humanity I experienced within the English and Classics Department of McAnulty College reflect the ideals and spirit of Duquesne University that enriches my mind, heart, and spirit.

Three additional factors sustained and enhanced my journey with the epic poets. With garden imagery so prevalent in PL, I came to understand Duquesne University as the garden of the mind, heart, and spirit for all who study and work on that campus on a hill. Indeed, the spiritual legacy of Joseph Straub, founder of Duquesne University, pervades the campus from the liturgical worship and homiletic insight provided by the Spiritan Community to the atmosphere of study and research offered by the library and by the professional assistance supplied by all supportive campus services. Moreover, the Duquesne Community in all its manifestations speaks to and models values inherent

within Cardinal Newman's "Idea of a University." The administration, the faculty, and the staff of Duquesne University allowed the idea of university to be a lived reality for me.

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# Introduction

**Overview:** The introduction has five sections. First, I note Milton's place within Christian tradition, summarize the plot of the epic, remark especially on the garden, and comment on the artful manner in which American clergymen appropriated Milton in sermons to instruct congregations in theology and scripture by using his poetry. Next, I review M.H. Abrams's four elements necessary for a work of art with my special emphasis: the theological ideas of Milton and the entangling of the reader into the text. Second, I address two questions that guided my study of PL and led me to look at it economically. Third, I indicate my thesis with the chapter organization for addressing an economics of salvation and a theology of grace within PL as a fourth section. Finally, I discuss how I arrived at the idea of the transcendent reader.

## **Paradise Lost Within the Christian Tradition**

In the Anglican, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic Churches, the first and second Scripture readings and also the Gospel for the First Sunday in Lent are substantially the same. The first reading from Genesis 2 and 3, actually the second creation story in Genesis, tells of the seduction of Eve by the serpent and the collaboration of Adam in their mutual disobedience. St. Paul in the second reading (Rom. 5.12-19) explains how through the sin of one man death came to all, while through the death of Christ grace came to many. The Gospel reading from St. Matthew recounts Christ's withstanding three temptations by Satan—descriptions of temptations with universal significance for all mankind.<sup>1</sup> The readings connect the rebellion of man with the integrity of Christ and remind the thoughtful hearer of Paradise Lost (PL) (1667) during the first reading; the Gospel reading prompts the hearer to remember Paradise Regained (PR) (1671). The similarity of the readings within the various denominations highlights the commonality of the tradition that binds Churches in the West and places the epics of John Milton (1608-1674) squarely within the teaching tradition of the

Churches even though his theology, reflected in De Doctrina Christiana (CD), often places him at odds with orthodoxy. Not the controversies that theological historians and literary critics like to highlight about Milton but the great theological tradition behind Milton's literary account—what John Diekhoff, remembering the words of E. M. W. Tillyard, calls “the greatest subject in the world, overwhelming in its implications and in its consequences,”<sup>2</sup> underscores this dissertation that examines the primeval story of Adam and Eve in light of the Scriptural tradition of God giving grace to His people and Milton's interpretation of it in PL for his readers.

With Scripture as his primary source, classical literature as a model, and Renaissance tradition as his guide, Milton writes an epic that has universal significance for all mankind and for his reader in particular. Milton draws in and entangles the reader throughout his narrative; in a sense, he forms and educates his reader just as he fashions his characters.<sup>3</sup> The reader experiences the anger and rebellion of Satan (Books I-II), the majesty and wisdom of God (Book III), the happiness and misery of Adam and Eve in their garden (Books IV-X), their dismissal from Eden (Book XII) within the historical events enumerated in Books XI-XII before their expulsion. In re-telling the Genesis story, Milton describes the relationship of God with all creation and humanity within a literary epic that embraces elements of classical and Renaissance epic. The reader quickly learns about the territory of competing forces in PL, characteristic of classical epics. By the end of Book III, Milton has defined two opposing spaces for two conflicting forces: the dark, chaotic place of Hell ruled by Satan (Books I-II) and the luminous, orderly site of Heaven (Book III) ruled by God. Moreover, the first space for the major action is none other than the spirit of malevolent Satan competing with a

logical God existing in a timeless, harmonious environment, the second space, for the souls of his divine creation, Adam and Eve. By Book IV the reader recognizes a third space for dramatic action—the special garden created by God for the first beings of His creation—that even Satan has power to invade.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of a garden, a paradise, evokes for readers images from history and literature of the classical Hanging Gardens of Babylon, or the garden in the Book of Solomon,<sup>5</sup> or the mythological Garden of Adonis, or the Bower of Bliss from The Faerie Queen. Whatever the image, a garden implies peace, beauty, bounty, and tranquility. However, to frustrate divine plans, order, and beauty, Satan violates this sacred space by leading Adam and Eve to a disobedience that he successfully maneuvers within the precincts of Eden by Book IX. Between Books IV and IX, Milton has Raphael narrate the defiance of Satan and his Legions within the sacred space of Heaven and the creation of Hell to accommodate him and his followers as well as the creation of earth as the sacred place for Adam and Eve who are corporeal but with transcendent spirits. He warns Adam that Satan will work on his reason and will to thwart God's designs. Book X introduces readers to the garden changed by the disobedience of its inhabitants from what was once a place of joy into the place of their sentence and the beginning of "all our woe" (1.3). Books XI and XII offer the reader a scripturally historical view of Adam and Eve's descendents living in places and periods of time corrupted by vice, yet having among them virtuous men who like Abdiel refuse to follow Satan and remain faithful to God. In their fidelity, they create another garden, the "paradise within" (12.587), the garden of the soul that results with the use of right reason and the practice of virtue, especially justice and charity. By the end of the epic, Milton's opposing spaces exist



within the lives of humanity: those who have made a garden within themselves lead a life of virtue, while those who have made of themselves a place of hell lead a life of vice. As universal as disobedience-in-the-garden plot is, perceptive readers also suspect that Milton has his poetic eye on them in re-telling the tale. They know it when he prays for a “fit audience” (7.31), an audience he has kept for over three centuries.

So artfully did Milton appropriate Scripture for his literary purposes that many in early America learned theology from sermons taken from his epics. Benjamin Coleman, an eighteenth-century Puritan preacher at the Brattle Street Church in Boston, relied on Milton: “Paradise Lost became a part of his spiritual vision, furnishing him with a language to expound doctrine and with images to dramatize Biblical events.”<sup>6</sup> George Sensabaugh cites Perry Miller who had observed that PL was “‘not so much a secondary Book of Genesis as a substitute for the original—at least as far as the pictorial imagination was concerned.’ By the nineteenth century Milton’s picture of Paradise had become so much a part of the American mind and psyche that some of its details could be seen in American primitive painting.”<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, many contemporary American students, although exposed to a religious education but immersed in the culture of a pragmatic secular society, often grasp the personal significance of Genesis only when they must read PL.

The poem extends across centuries into our post-Modern secular age that has scientific answers for almost everything. PL, however, continues to find readers because Milton’s epic, reaching into the depth of Scripture, makes the myth of Genesis live in the mind of the reader and speaks to the perennial human condition. His appropriation of Scripture to re-tell the creation and temptation stories in another form as epic, the oldest

genre in Western literature, seems both suitable and fitting as institutional religion loses its traditional hold on the faithful. Thus, not only does the scriptural myth stay alive in the minds of readers exposed to literature, but it assures a place for Milton in the curriculum where scholars and students debate its levels of meaning from the speculative to the practical, the historical to the contemporary, and the theological to the psychological.<sup>8</sup> However, the reader of PL cannot discount Milton's theology, a life-long interest and concern for him, for theology grounds the epic and permeates its dialogue.

M. H. Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamp reminds a reader of four elements that one needs to consider in a work of art: the artist, the work, the audience, and the universe or nature. The first three elements are nearly self-explanatory for students or readers of literature, but for his fourth term Abrams selects "universe" as a "more neutral and comprehensive term" rather than "that word-of-all-work 'nature,'" which "either is or bears some relation to an objective state of affairs." Universe as an element may comprise "people, actions, ideas and feelings, material things and events, or super-sensible essences."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in PL Milton places his epic in a cosmic setting encompassing all creation, including heaven, hell, and earth, and even appropriating all known scriptural history; his narrator, a pilgrim on life's journey just like Milton's reader, relates events that he sees for his readers whom he assumes recognize a self-responsibility before God the Creator and who work out their salvation just as postlapsarian Adam and Eve do with "Providence thir guide" (12.648). Thus, in terms of PL, Abrams's term "universe" would include the political, economic, and especially theological ideas that Milton incorporates into PL by which he actively works on the

minds of readers. Even though all four of Abrams elements as mentioned above (the artist, the work, the audience, and the universe) receive attention, have relevance, and are intertwined within this dissertation, special focus does belong to the theological issue of salvation and grace for a contemporary reader who may morph into a “fit,” even a transcendent, reader as the text works on him/her.

Within PL Milton offers readers of any age or period models of right conduct according to Gospel values, first in Abdiel, the servant of God among Satan’s Legions who remains obedient to the Divine, and second in a repentant Adam and Eve. Through the dialogue of his characters, Milton presents these principles for “our first Parents” (IV.6) and their descendents/readers to learn, integrate, and act upon through the instruction of Raphael and Michael. Readers, too, have the choice to accept or reject the angelic recommendations that lead to the “paradise within” (XII. 587). Michael’s advice gives Adam principles to cope with difficulty, principles to live in community, and principles to contend with the experience of the self-communication of the living God. PL survives the political and historical upheavals of seventeenth-century England and succeeding eras, even transcending the epic genre to address the immutable within the reader. By setting his epic drama in a garden before time and history began, Milton carefully leaves out references that could distract from its origins in Genesis so that the epic awakens what is ever new and fresh for each generation of readers.

### **Preliminary Questions**

I am concerned with the economics of salvation, its corresponding concept of grace embedded in PL, and its effects on modern readers of a seventeenth-century epic, who, as Stanley Fish observes, may be “surprised by sin,” as they read the text. I believe

Milton wished his readers to be more surprised by grace than by sin. Two major questions guided my thinking as I worked through my argument: first, what then is the economy of salvation that grounds PL, and second, how does Milton involve readers in that economy of salvation so that they make correct life choices by using right reason? Since one does not usually associate the term economy with PL, I struggled with this concept, but ultimately I believe it accurately reflects what I think Milton was about in creating his epic and in his appeal for a “fit audience” (7.31).

Although he does not use the word “economy,” Milton certainly uses many words, phrases, and ideas in PL that have economic connotations. He lived within the seventeenth-century English economic system that conceived and gave birth to the first capitalist economy that burst upon the world during the eighteenth century with the consequent problems of colonization, urbanization, and industrialization. In light of trade and economic problems that Milton addresses as Secretary of Foreign Tongues under Cromwell and his own economic experiences during the Civil Wars and Restoration, Milton uses terms current in tradition and culture in PL, thus giving an economic cast to his writing that finds reflection in his theological ideas. Of course, biblical writing already has an economic slant before Milton takes up his pen. Moreover, Milton experiences the dehumanization of an individual by abuse and rejection, the exploitation/manipulation of an individual by competing market, social, and political forces, and the polarization of a nation that occurs with political change that individuals face in his contemporary society. Hence, readers can readily identify with the economic milieu in which Milton lives, writes, and suffers and which he reflects in ideas and word choice in PL.

For PL Milton selects a decidedly universal religious topic: man's disobedience memorialized in Genesis that he supports with historical, prophetic, and wisdom literature of Sacred Scripture which he embeds within the classical epic form of Homer and Vergil to mirror but surpass Dante who categorized sin and sinners. Yet, Milton moves beyond classical contexts and conclusions. Although he instructs his readers through the Angel Michael that fallen man now possesses a better Eden, a "paradise within" discovered and achieved by the practice of heroic obedience and love, Milton sees to it that an element of unknowing of Absolute Mystery confronts Adam and Eve in their pre- and postlapsarian conditions just as circumstances of historical existence confront the reader who in quiet or stressful moments examines life for an intelligible, meaningful context for personal existence. Ultimately aware of this incomprehensible Mystery—Absolute Being—our first parents under angelic instruction live within that context of reality both within the Garden and as they leave in banishment with "Providence thir guide" (12.647). The Proem to Book IX reveals that Milton intends to write an epic with a "higher argument" (42)—what I name "a call to grace and salvation" that Milton names "the better fortitude / Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom" (31-32). Heretofore, such an argument had not occurred in classical and renaissance epics where poets sing of war or national glory. Certainly, Milton's subject surpasses that of his literary predecessors. J. Kelley Sowards, historian and author of Western Civilization to 1660, states that "the Puritan experiments in religion and government had produced the last great spirit of the English Renaissance in John Milton."<sup>10</sup> That "great spirit" gives voice to an enduring epic, classical in its allusions, scriptural in its intent, and humanistic

in its concern whereby readers meet the Divine, their first parents, angelic and diabolical spirits, and confront the reality of good and evil.

### **Argument/Thesis: An Economics of Salvation and a Theology of Grace within PL**

I argue that with the divine discourse in Book III of PL, Milton, as theologian, in order to introduce a Protestant voice, purposefully enters the early seventeenth-century debates regarding grace that divided the Churches of Europe. Additionally, John Milton offers PL to a congregation of fit readers for their theological and moral instruction—perhaps some might even experience a grace-filled reading—so that they would recognize a relationship with the Creator and creation, choose the reign of God over the reign of Mammon, and work for the holiness of life that leads to a “paradise within” (12.587). In other words, Milton offers his readers an economics of salvation whereby they may buy into the kingdom of heaven by selling secular values. In the cycle of choosing the kingdom of heaven and selecting its values, they are aided by grace, a free gift of God. In summary, my thesis addresses two components of one argument: the historical-objective problem of grace addressed by Milton in PL and what this means to a reader who, in discourse with the text, faces a choice for or against the kingdom of heaven or the dominion of Satan such as “our first parents” (4.6) experienced.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation contains an introduction, six chapters that divide nicely into three parts of two chapters each, and a conclusion. Chapter I and II cover material necessary for a reader to understand PL within the epic tradition and Milton’s self-definition of himself. Chapter III examines grace prior to the seventeenth century while

Chapter IV examines Milton and the grace controversies of his century. Chapter V and VI pertain to the reader of PL and Milton's "higher Argument."

Chapter I, "Preliminary Considerations," examines the economics of learning to establish PL within the economics of knowledge that includes the epic tradition. Herein, I distinguish between an economics of knowledge, i.e., all objective knowledge available for humanity stored within libraries until needed by mankind and an economics of learning, i.e., all subjective knowledge in its bits and pieces acquired by a person over a life-time that allows a person to make connections and see relationships among ideas. In an economy of knowledge/learning nothing is ever wasted; a similar phenomenon occurs within the economics of salvation. Thus, an awareness of the principles involved in an economics of knowledge/learning and its application to the epic tradition allow the reader to discover by analogy another order of economics that exists within PL: that of salvation and grace. In other words, if an economics of knowledge/learning exists in the natural order where nothing is wasted, so must an economics of knowledge/learning or an understanding of the nature of salvation and the meaning of grace exist within the supernatural order in which concern PL shares.

Chapter II, "The Sacred Calling of John Milton," argues that Milton's sense of a divine calling and his natural aptness for study, language, rhetoric, and literature prepare him to write of sacred realities. By developing Milton's self-understanding of his sacred calling as poet, priest, and prophet, I establish a background for the chapters that follow.

Chapter III, "Grace: Its Historical and Scriptural Contexts," offers an analysis of grace as it develops from early biblical times through the scholastic period that covers five historical periods. This chapter serves as an introduction to the nature of grace in PL

and presents a survey of grace as background to the difficult question of grace facing Post-Reformation Christians.

Chapter IV, “The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Grace and Free Will Controversies” covers the controversy with the Reformers as well as the debate concerning efficacious grace in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between the Jesuits and Dominicans and Milton’s contribution to that conversation. I find no evidence through MLA International Bibliography searches that anyone has examined the De Auxiliis Controversy, or grace controversy, of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century with reference to Milton’s theology of grace as he articulates it in PL. I include an overview of the controversy in Chapter IV.

Chapter V, “The Reader of PL,” and Chapter VI, “The Economy of Salvation in PL,” address five topics or issues concerned with the reader. Chapter V covers two of the five topics: (1) the philosophical shift that occurred with “the turn toward the subject” that Milton anticipated in his concern for his reader and (2) reader response theory that develops as a result of the philosophical interest in the subject. Chapter VI covers the three remaining topics: (3) PL, an epic experienced as a drama enacted within a reader’s mind; (4) the possibility that PL becomes a means for a reader to reflect on matters of grace, responsibility, and salvation; and (5) the “higher argument” of PL that a reader may discover.

In the conclusion, I bring together the reader, the poet, and the “higher Argument.” Indeed, Milton himself, reader and listener, experienced his epic read back to him by his amanuenses. Before the reader of the epic experiences the reading of PL, Milton experienced it in the creativity of his life and art. PL thus mirrors for the reader



Milton's creativity as he presents The Fall through his narrator. As a result, Milton's epic confronts a serious reader in any generation with reality revealing questions that Milton himself experiences and brings to the foreground in PL. Milton's reader may reflectively discover, as Adam and Eve do, a self addressed by the Divine and a call to a relationship which far from a boring reading challenges one on all the levels of existence. Perhaps, he or she may become a transcendent reader.

Additionally, I created two appendices that include uses of grace and economic terms found within PL that follow after the conclusion.

### **Discovering the Transcendent Reader**

Writing about PL is a serious endeavor in which a reader attempts to render intelligible his/her own limited experience of an indeterminate text connected with creation, being, and existence and thereby account for an awareness of the transcendence of spirit that occurs while reading the text. When a reader arrives at this point, he/she realizes that the epic speaks to a universal human condition that finds interpretation not only in literature but in other disciplines. Therefore, the reader needs to reach out not only to Miltonic scholars, but also to those in other fields who enrich the work of Miltonists.<sup>11</sup> Thus, I have benefited from reader-response theorists to understand what happens when the reader reads a text and from philosophers who define terms such as transcendence and horizon of the mind as well as from theologians who explain the dynamics of salvation, grace, and mystery.

The "contemporary reader," a phrase used by Dr. Albert Labriola for his NEH Summer Seminars, takes other forms in literary theory as the implied, suitable, model, actual, reader. Milton's fit reader has morphed into as many forms as there are theorists.

Reader response theorists, first Stanly Fish and later Wolfgang Iser, offer guidelines to understanding what readers do while reading. Yet, I questioned how and where these theorists fit into a larger epistemological puzzle. In other words, until I could ground literary theory within a philosophical structure, I was frustrated intellectually. I remembered that Martin Heidegger, student of Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology, emphasized man's consciousness in determining meaning that offered a philosophical foundation to my understanding of reader-response. However, when I discovered Karl Rahner, Heidegger's student, and read the English translation of Rahner's Grundkurs des Glaubens (1976), Foundations of Christian Faith, I subsequently approached texts not just from the phenomenological method useful for reader-response criticism but with an anthropological focus so that a person's or reader's experience of self-understanding, growth in consciousness, openness to the transcendent, and reflection upon the mystery of existence became the center from which I approached a text. Perhaps the phrase "transcendent reader" best expresses how I now read PL because the term transcendent implies a reader's "openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality."<sup>12</sup> The chapters that follow reflect the importance for a reader of validating experience, reflection, and judgment in approaching a text. The terms that literary theorists apply to readers may imply transcendent; perhaps this is what Milton meant by his term "fit." Barbara Lewalski observes that "because heroic values have been so profoundly transvalued in Paradise Lost the poem is sometimes assigned to categories beyond epic"—such as the transcendent epic.<sup>13</sup> In that case, would Milton not desire that his fit reader be also a transcendent one?

Interestingly, I discovered that the first five chapter titles of Rahner's text parallel in broad terms topics Milton treats in his epic. For example, Chapter I: "Hearer of the Word" certainly relates to Adam and Eve as they hear the God speaking to them in the Garden; Chapter II: "Man in the Presence of Absolute Mystery" definitely speaks to the reality Milton portrays within his epic, especially in the dialogues that occur between the Son and our first parents; Chapter III: "Man As a Being Threatened Radically by Guilt" unquestionably reminds readers of Books IX and X; Chapter IV: "Man As The Event of God's Free, and Forgiving Self-Communication" surely addresses events Milton expresses in Books X through XII; Chapter V: "The History of Salvation And Revelation" without a doubt could refer to scriptural events that Books XI and XII portray.

Rahner holds a particular appeal in a dissertation about the reader of Milton, a seventeenth-century poet and theologian, because Rahner, living in central Europe among Lutherans and Calvinists in the twentieth century, enjoyed an openness to the Reformers whose sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura (grace alone, faith alone, scripture alone) he understood as an articulation of their belief that God's grace is the cause of salvation, that salvation occurs through saving faith, and that Sacred Scripture contains meaning and promise of salvation. In his essay "Nature and Grace" Rahner makes a point that the phrase simul justus et peccator ["at the same time a just person and a sinner," an idea used first by St. Bonaventure in a sermon (no. 33) given on the sixth Sunday after Pentecost 1267 or 1268 in which he uses non . . . simul justus et peccator and by Martin Luther later in which he [Luther] omits the "non"] needs more investigation by the major denominations.<sup>14</sup> In other words, Rahner understands that reconciliation "of what is

right in the Protestant doctrine and how it can be made more clearly valid for us” offers “new possibilities” for discussion and Christian resolution in which “we must see Christ as the center of the whole existing world and economy of salvation.”<sup>15</sup> Certainly then, the study of Milton’s reader of PL and Milton himself with ties to the Calvinist community and his hopes for ecclesiastical and doctrinal reform within his lifetime presents another type of opportunity for extending dialogue within ecumenical and literary communities.

Henceforth, I brought a renewed awareness of ontology, theodicy, and theology to bear on the experience of reading PL even as Stanley Fish taught me to interpret, to question more critically, and to expect challenges to old ways of thinking. In following a method that incorporates the experience of consciousness explained by the phenomenologists, the reality of transcendence defended by philosophers, and the value of reader-response as interpreted by literary theorists, I discovered an economy of Gospel values in PL that make Milton’s text relevant to the contemporary reader living in a Christian but secular society.

With this dissertation I enter a conversation about Milton and the economics of salvation and the gift of grace that I find as a theme uniting all twelve books of PL. Perhaps future scholars may contribute to the conversation through research or interest. Milton never mentions an economics of salvation or a theology of grace, but they have actuality within the epic. Only after reflection about the epic as a whole did I have the imaginative moment that saw Milton’s work as truly speaking to the reality of living and dying within an economy of grace and salvation. Since no topic ever remains closed or definitive, new points of view disclose aspects hidden, neglected, or overlooked, as literary theory, Modernism, and psychoanalysis reveal. Indeed, the promise of

ecumenical unity invites discussions about a common topic such as grace and salvation, for both hold essential doctrinal positions within the Christian community of churches. Moreover, no reason exists that either grace or salvation remains a topic only for theological or religious discussion. Certainly, treating grace and salvation in a poetic context, as Milton does, makes both grace and salvation relevant and problematic for the reader of any religion. Moreover, the concept of a transcendent reader that incorporates notions of a contemporary, suitable, competent, fit reader allows one to approach PL existentially so that the “indeterminate epic” yields meaning on many levels that speak to the reader’s spiritual needs. Georgia Christopher recognizes that Milton’s concept of the Holy Spirit conforms closely to the position of Calvin.<sup>16</sup> She notes “a cardinal point of evangelical doctrine was that the Holy Spirit breathes where he lists and that his movements could never be predicted in advance, just as one can never predict the exact moment when a literary text like King Lear will yield a profound insight.”<sup>17</sup> For a reader of Milton and of poetry this means that the “curve” of a reading is “unique and essentially mysterious” since Christopher allows that within the reading of a text such as PL an “almost infinite number of doctrinal epiphanies” may occur.<sup>18</sup> Georgia Christopher also teaches that “ultimately, the success of Milton’s poetry lies less in the local effects of style than in the “poetic” power of his set beliefs, in the combinatorial possibilities of his doctrinal system, and in the broad strategies that convey the power of this doctrine.”<sup>19</sup> A transcendent reader finding an economics of salvation and grace within PL would surely fit Christopher’s description of a doctrinal epiphany that discloses the power of the poet.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The Episcopal and Anglican Lectionary lists readings (cycle A) for the First Sunday of Lent:

Ps. 32  
First Reading: Gen. 2:15-7, 3:1-7  
Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19  
Gospel: Matt. 4:1-4

The Roman Catholic Lectionary (NCCB / USCC) lists readings (cycle A) for the First Sunday of Lent taken from the New American Bible:

Ps. 32  
First Reading: Gen. 2:7-9; 3:1-7  
Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19  
Gospel: Matt. 4:1-11

The Lutheran Revised Common Lectionary lists readings (cycle A) for the First Sunday of Lent

Ps. 32  
First Reading: Gen. 2:7-9; 3:1-7  
Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19  
Gospel: Matt. 4:1-11

All Scriptural references within this dissertation come from the New Revised Standard Version (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson/Oxford UP, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> John Diekhoff, Milton's Paradise Lost (New York: Columbia UP, 1946) 49.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Iser uses the term entanglement in The Act of Reading (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1980) that I will use later in chapter 5. Iser's explanation explains how Milton involves the reader in Paradise Lost. "This entanglement entails several effects at the same time. While we are caught up in a text, we do not at first know what is happening to us. This is why we often feel the need to talk about books we have read—not in order to gain some distance from them so much as to find out just what it is that we were entangled in." Iser adds: "as our presence in the text depends upon this involvement, it represents a correlative of the text in the mind, which is a necessary complement to the event-correlative. But when we are present in an event something must happen to us. The more 'present' the text is to us, the more our habitual selves—at least for the duration of the reading—recede into the 'past'. The literary text relegates our own prevailing views into the past by itself becoming a present experience, for what is now happening or may happen was not possible so long as our characteristic views formed our present" 131.

<sup>4</sup> The creation and settling of Eden and Pandemonium have similarity to the colonization of the Americas that occurred during the seventeenth century. Satan bears similarity to the Spanish colonizers who ravaged South America for its wealth.

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<sup>5</sup> The Book of Solomon is also known as Solomon's Canticle of Canticles in the Douay edition of A.D.1609.

<sup>6</sup> George F. Sensabaugh, Milton in Early America (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1964) 44.

<sup>7</sup> Sensabaugh 48.

<sup>8</sup> At some point in one's academic life a student/reader questions the curriculum and his/her relationship to it. T. S. Eliot reminds readers of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in Literary Criticism, Eds., Robert C. Davis and Ronald Schleifer, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Longman, 1998) that "criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism" 34. What Eliot says is "inevitable" occurs to most students and readers.

A student/reader may ask, for example, why John Milton (1608-1674), a seventeenth-century Puritan, remains in the canon—itself a controversial term for many readers—after so many centuries when modern poets and writers speak to the issues of the present century since the seventeenth century and a Puritan poet have little relevance for the Postmodern student. The student recognizes as well that other disciplines besides British literature such as philosophy, psychology, or theology offer similar insights and values that one discovers in reading PL. Perhaps, a student reasons, educators could replace Milton with a less strenuous text so that a student achieves a similar knowledge with less effort than PL requires. On the one hand, conceivably aware of issues Milton raises in his epic, the English student may wonder what scholars in other disciplines teach about issues Milton addresses in PL that would then make reading an epic of twelve books unnecessary or lighten the burden of epic reading by revealing ideas in plainer English. As the student soon discovers, questions about the curriculum embed themselves in questions that life itself asks of everyone. In the quest for answers for both curriculum and life the student discovers the purpose of education—the formation of his mind, heart, and spirit.

<sup>9</sup> M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic theory and the Critical Tradition (New York: Oxford UP, 1953) 6.

<sup>10</sup> J. Kelly Sowards, Western Civilization to 1660 (New York: St Martin's P, 1969) 716.

<sup>11</sup> For example, could Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) or Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) who inquired about consciousness, phenomena, and existence add something to assist the reader of PL, or could a student reading Milton find valuable in what Friedrich Schleiermacher (d.1834), or Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), or Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) had to say about hermeneutics—the phenomenon of understanding a text and its correct interpretation? On one hand, a reader may experience restless anxiety in reading Milton's epic especially as thorny issues such as disobedience, sin, and grace

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occur in PL, but the reader/student may not have a vocabulary or awareness to name the anxiety or mental discomfort that besets him or her. Paul Tillich (d.1965), existentialist and German Lutheran theologian, describes three forms of angst that each person undergoes at some stage of character development—a search for meaning in living life, a sense of guilt for past failures, and a fear of the finality of death—all three fears which PL may trigger in the reader. On the other hand, Karl Rahner (d.1984), Jesuit theologian and student of Heidegger, claims that each person in his or her self-transcendence has an unthematic experiential awareness of grace that might help the reader understand ideas that the text of PL engenders. As the reader soon discovers, questions about the text embed themselves in questions that life itself asks of everyone.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 20.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, “The Genres in *Paradise Lost*,” The Cambridge Companion to Milton, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Dennis Danielson (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006) 114.

<sup>14</sup> See George H. Tavard, From Bonaventure to the Reformers (Milwaukee; Marquette UP, 2005), who quotes a portion of the sermon: “One and the same person cannot be just and sinner, good and evil, a servant of God and a servant of the devil, because no one can serve two masters who give contrary orders.” Tavard continues: “What seems initially intriguing is the verbal contradiction, if not more between this sentence and the famous statement of Martin Luther, which became a sort of slogan in the Reformation, that the Christian who is justified by faith is “simul justus et peccator,” at the same time just and sinful” 64.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Rahner, “Nature and Grace,” Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress P, 1992) 100.

<sup>16</sup> Georgia Christopher, Milton and the Science of the Saints (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 12.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher 17.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher 17.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher 16.



# Chapter I

## Preliminary Considerations

**Overview:** This chapter contains five sections. I glance at Milton's prose to situate him historically for the contemporary reader. Next, I examine the question of an economics of knowledge and learning in itself as propaedeutic for understanding the economics of salvation, noting a broader meaning of economics in learning and Milton's economy of presentation. Third, recognizing PL as a connective link to epic culture and also with an association within the economics of knowledge, I define epic, identify Milton's debt to the epic tradition, and explain PL as a tertiary stage in epic development. Fourth, I comment on Milton's grand style with help from C. S. Lewis. Fifth, I recognize problems that modern critics such as William Empson have had with Milton's God. Additionally, I mention Harold Bloom's characterization of Milton as a strong rather than a great poet.

### **Introduction: The Importance of the Reader of PL**

Milton translates all that formed him into his three last great works, but he never forgets his reader whom he instructs especially in PL, certainly a didactic epic. Indeed, the reader of PL as Stanley Fish argues is both "subject" and "centre of reference" of Milton's work.<sup>1</sup> In earlier epics such was not the case. Unquestionably, the classical Bard speaks to an audience, or a poet considers his reader, but not to the extent or urgency that Milton recreates Biblical myth for his reader. PL is more than epic entertainment; it is epic written with the salvation of mankind in mind, for it touches mysteries of the holy, the sacred, that enters into the final integrity of each human being. In the vocation Milton ultimately chooses for himself as poet for a congregation of readers, he enters an economy of living, learning, and writing that requires one generation to pass learning and insight on to another generation. Readers, then, are Milton's beneficiaries who share in the fruit of his education, insight, experience, and yes, his

special relationship with the Divine because he seriously accepted the responsibilities of talent and learning.

For this reason, in this chapter I cover five topics. First, I glance at Milton's prose to situate him historically for the contemporary reader. Second, I address two general propaedeutic ideas or principles that serve as preparation for the chapters that follow and that I call an economics of learning and an economics of knowledge. Within "An Economy of Reading and Learning for PL," I consider three sub-topics by examining a broader meaning for an economics of learning and knowledge, by looking at another aspect of that economy, Milton's economics of presentation in PL, and by discussing concepts of right reason and conscience that are necessary for a contemporary reader who may not possess seventeenth-century philosophical terminology to understand PL but possesses, instead, an experiential awareness, a form of learning or knowledge, to read the text. Third, in "PL and its Connection to the Epic Tradition" I illustrate the economy of knowledge that the epic tradition fortuitously embodies as one poet builds on his predecessor. Fourth, I address the importance of style for the poet by drawing on the scholarship of C. S. Lewis and sketch briefly what critics think of Milton and his God, a controversial figure for some readers. Finally, I suggest that in the creation of his epic, Milton as reader and poet takes from the accumulated bank of objective literary, historical, and scientific material all he needs for his presentation without being consumed by what Harold Bloom, from the title of his book, calls the "anxiety of influence." Within the fifth section of this chapter, I mention a few of Milton's adverse critics whose negative criticism offers insight into the shadow side of poet and poem

since human creativity also partakes of the crushing narrowness of existence and the darkness of creation.

### **Historical Perspective**

Although Milton's prose works, the work of his left hand, survive as his contribution to English political and religious controversies in the seventeenth century, their historical reality continues to endure as a sub-text in his poetry, the work of his right hand. Stephen Dobranski observes that the prose "rather than distracting Milton from his future poetic endeavours . . . complemented them. Milton relied on his participation in the debate against Episcopacy both to forge his individual identity and assist his development as a writer."<sup>2</sup> Within his militant prose, Milton develops principles that shape life in service to a higher cause reflected in PL (1667), Paradise Regained (PR) (1671), and Samson Agonistes (SA) (1671). Accordingly, English political and religious turmoil serve as background and preparation for Milton's later poetry.

During 1642-1652, years of political and religious upheaval in England, Milton considers the subject matter for an epic while he writes contentious tracts that prepare and mature him for his great purpose—the composition of a national epic for the English people. Milton's prose takes readers into the troubled times of the English Civil War, introducing them to the birth of the Modern Period when England experiences political, economic, and religious turmoil as the old order of medievalism gives way to new modes of thinking, acting, and believing.<sup>3</sup> The year 1649, for example, proves critical when the British indict and execute King Charles I, abolish the House of Lords, proclaim England a Republic, and continue colonization of North America. Living in Post-Reformational England and immersed in the political and religious chaos of seventeenth-century

London, Milton earns a reputation as a formidable controversialist by his anti-episcopal pamphlets (1641-1645) even before Oliver Cromwell and the new government appoint him Secretary for Foreign Languages (March, 1649) where he serves the Commonwealth as a translator, an interpreter for foreign visitors, and a defender of the government by writing the Articles of Peace (1649), Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio (1649), Eikonoklastes (1649-1650), and Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda (1654). During the year of secret negotiations after the death of Oliver Cromwell for the restoration of exiled Charles Stuart living in France, Milton continues writing pamphlets to alert the citizenry of a grave political and religious crisis if Charles II returns. During his government service and pamphlet writing, Milton formulates principles for national self-government that have earned him respect even to this day— arguments against monarchy, the divine rights of kings, and the duty and responsibility of citizens to oppose tyranny that reflect what he learned of intrigue and power politics. John Shawcross finds that Milton in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (1649) contributes eight points to political theory that found ready application within colonial America.<sup>4</sup> Milton's prose thus provides a glimpse into English historical turmoil and tension during which he amazingly formulates, plans, and structures what he first imagines would be a tragedy into the world's last literary epic, PL.

Milton's prose works even provide a context for the contemporary reader to understand how the United States became what it is and why Americans think as they do. Shawcross observes that in the Revolutionary period John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson cite and quote Milton most in "manuscripts, letters, and some printed works."<sup>5</sup> The papers of Thomas Jefferson from 1776-1791 reveal that he took

notes from Of Reformation (1641), Of Prelatical Episcopacy (1641), Reason of Church-Government (1642), An Apology for Smectymnuus (1642), and Paradise Lost (1667).

Shawcross finds that the influence of Milton on American political writers may be “in making their own decisions as they write, whereby Milton becomes a presence [my emphasis] in their work.”<sup>6</sup> The political experience Milton gains working within the government finds expression in his last three works that reveal both the chaos a disordered life inflicts on others and the peace a harmonious life brings to another.

However, struck with an ever deepening blindness and disillusioned with the turn of historical events in the return of Charles II to power during the Restoration, Milton turns from prose to poetry. Exiled from political work or favor by his previous service for the Commonwealth and his controversial prose, jailed for a time after the Restoration, and imprisoned by blindness from activities in the larger social community, Milton in 1660 seriously reflects on the dreadful condition of mankind that results in his great epic, PL.

When one considers how his pamphlet wars with the English Church, his defense of the Commonwealth, and his scholarly works on education (Of Education 1644) and the freedom of the press (Areopagitica 1644)—all the work of his left hand—prepare and influence Milton’s last three great works, PL, PR, and SA—the work of his right hand—one has glimpsed the wonderful process of the economy of learning and preparation for a great purpose in the life of Milton. Actually, in the economy of preparation for any work and the formation of a person for great or small purpose, nothing ever is wasted or unused. Thus, everything contributes to shaping Milton for a purpose within the literary community but also within what we may call the Divine Economy, an economy in which one not only lives in created time and space but also lives for some eternal purpose,

perhaps unknown or unsuspected by the person so destined. In the Divine Economy, we confront great Mystery that asks questions of us and we in turn question. For example, at a time of physical darkness for him and fearful for the political destiny of England, Milton reflects on the human condition in three great works that reverberate down the centuries. The first of these works, PL, urges the reader to consider in Adam, Eve, Satan, Abdiel, and in the catalogue of great and lesser Old Testament figures mentioned through Books XI-XII, the positive effects of spiritual heroism in the midst of adversity and temptation and the destructive forces that pride and disobedience unleash on mankind, themes that Milton developed in variant forms in his two later works, PR and SA.

### **An Economy of Reading and Learning for PL**

Milton structures his epic as a didactic one that instructs readers through an economics of learning, knowledge, and presentation. The economics of knowledge [my emphasis] as a broader, more objective term refers to the accumulation of knowledge by mankind over the course of history, housed in a “bank” of libraries, ancient and modern, and now held somewhat by the internet and digital archives, whereas an economics of learning or reading [my emphasis], a subjective term, refers to what one individual reader accumulates of learning by study or reading. I distinguish between an economics of knowledge as an objective reality that scholars, teachers, and libraries often measure and an economics of learning, a subjective reality, as what a reader accumulates of a subject over a lifetime, houses within the bank of the mind and memory, and by which the reader processes bits and pieces of information into a structured personal whole to help make sense of fragments of knowledge learned in disciplines. A teacher may present a logical, economically structured argument in a lecture—the economics of knowledge—but the

student/reader processes the knowledge to make it an economics of learning. Such a distinction of terms makes clear a reality. For example, in knowing, reading, or hearing about the economics of salvation from Scriptural reading, homilies, or viewing PL in that light and living it as a learned experience, objective knowledge turns into a subjective event. Just as the human body possesses the ability to process energy from nutrients economically for the health of an individual, so too does the human mind have the power to process forms of learning in an economically efficient manner for the good of the person that reverberates into good for the community.

When one considers the discipline of economics, one immediately thinks of an undergraduate course noted for terms such as supply and demand for goods and services, GNP, the stock market, recession, depression, inflation, and distribution of wealth. Economics for the average person generally conjures up images of financial matters—prices, banks, and money—but the term economy finds relevance in explaining other areas of living. However, the term, with a broader connotation than the science of economics suggests, refers to various dimensions concerned with living expansively or narrowly within society and culture.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, the phrase economics of reading/learning relates to the general meaning of economy and its underlying values, for a person of necessity needs to process a wealth of information in an efficient manner for the good of the person.

Thus, one speaks of the economics of learning to mean that study, or a ready supply of knowledge, of a subject that permits the student to meet the demands of an instructor or of an educational system in an efficient, productive, enriching manner. However, to meet the requirements of the subject, the student must re-arrange a schedule,

forgo, or sell time required for certain other interests in order to buy time for study, a valuable commodity for the student. From another point of view, an instructor, knowing the depth and breadth required for understanding the requirements of a course, which is of course a value, so structures and trims material presented in order to maximize the benefit for the class to achieve the greatest understanding of the subject. Both student and instructor receive compensation for their work and selling of wants in favor of academic needs in the currency of intellectual, perhaps even psychological, success—knowledge, understanding, intellectual joy, and delight in proportion to the effort expended.<sup>8</sup> Fortuitously, I have come to recognize that the values in an economy of learning and delight may also exist between the reader and the author especially when the author has explicitly prayed for a fit reader (VII.31). In fact, John Milton structures his message and presentation economically to fit this purpose.

Did the term economics of presentation occur to Milton? I do not know. The first edition of PL reveals a highly structured and patterned text that certainly Milton meant for his reader. What we do know is that he had to change his original text of ten books published in 1667 to conform to his publisher's urging that it be of twelve books in the second edition (1674), making the number of books in Milton's epic similar to the multiple of six found in Homer and Vergil. Roy Flannagan suggests Milton may have been "coerced" by his publisher, Samuel Simmons, to make the change.<sup>9</sup> These demands must have caused Milton consternation; his original economy of presentation had then to conform to the requirements of publisher rather than what he had in mind. Accordingly, Milton divides Book VII into the present Book VII and Book VIII; original Book VIII then becomes the present Book IX with original IX now Book X; original Book X



becomes present Books XI and XII. Milton has to add lines to the beginning of Book VIII and XII to conform to the change which shifted the center of the poem  $4^{1/2}$  lines in the second edition as Alastair Fowler notes.<sup>10</sup> John Shawcross, likewise taking notice of Milton's particular, "careful" organization of edition one (Ed I) of PL, remarks that where "the exact middle" occurs in Book VI at lines 761 and 762 exactly 5,275 lines happen before and after the midpoint. Indeed, Shawcross makes the point that PL, "well-structured, well-balanced, intricately organized," evinces besides an "involved skeletal patterning, the work of an astute master planner."<sup>11</sup> Of course, with the changes required for the second edition, the text loses the original order Milton had in mind, yet to which he adjusts for the sake of his readers and publisher. Hence, Milton's highly organized and patterned text for Ed I and the changes he effected for the next edition reflect an economy of presentation in thought and actuality. Indeed, the controlled, external structure of the epic noted by Fowler and Shawcross, truly part of an economics of presentation, finds reflection in economic terminology that runs throughout the epic. Certainly, Milton means that his patterned organization of PL would resonate upon his reader's mind in identification with characters and events.

When my thinking about Milton's relationship with his reader shifted from one of external influence as poet of an epic relating a biblical myth to one of internal persuasion, I understood that Milton really presents his reader with an argument about choice for obedience or disobedience within his account of Genesis as the universal story of God's relationship with mankind and not just an account of "Man's First Disobedience" (I.1). PL offers readers an argument about choice for virtue or for vice in which Milton uses economic, philosophical, and theological language to present values of the highest

importance, but at the same time he instructs his reader about decision making so that the reading process becomes a review of either what the reader already knows from previous learning or a re-structuring of the experience of choice so that the reader relates decision making to past experience. In fact, in decisions about choice the fit reader uses the economic principle of selling some good in order to buy a better or lesser good or value that occurs when the reader selects the better of two options during the reasoning process; only upon reflection does the reader recognize the economics involved in decision making. Additionally, the reader comes to understand how closely conscience functions with choice and reason in the epic, for conscience is nothing more than reason shining the light of intellect on a matter under consideration, i.e., a situation of choice. Barbara Lewalski enlarges the range of individuals involved in choice and reason in the epic as she declares that PL “is preeminently a poem about knowing and choosing—for the Miltonic Bard, for the characters, for the reader.”<sup>12</sup> However, The Bard and his characters, even though they exist in a Scriptural context, are but literary creations of Milton that he uses to influence the decisions, attitudes, and values of the only humans who matter: his readers. The reader confronts the reality of conscience and the effects of choice that brings me to the third issue of this section—the problems associated with choice, conscience, and free will.

Indeed, the Father declares: “Reason is also choice” (3.108). In fact, Milton holds that reason has two functions and makes a distinction between logical reason, or the discursive function, that argues from premisses to a conclusion—the everyday use of rational activity—and right reason or conscience, given by God to all men, that acts as man’s moral guide.<sup>13</sup> The idea of conscience implanted in man, along with other gifts not

given to animals such as speech, whereby God's people will render Him obedience develops slowly as biblical scholars recognize and then name later as an inner experience of guidance or guilt. Scripturally, conscience hearkens back to another covenant made with Israel (after the covenants made to Abraham and Moses) before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (597-538 BC). The covenant announced by Jeremiah extends the covenant of Sinai: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). Milton understands that right reason could fail a person when considering options, but he has the Father recall His gift of conscience:

My Umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,  
Light after light well us'd they shall attain,  
And to that end persisting, safe arrive (3.195-198).

To support conscience, Milton believes God has an additional plan, first in Scripture which directs and motivates a person, and second in the Holy Spirit who inspires a person with grace to follow right reason: "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28).<sup>14</sup>

To enhance his economy of presentation and the understanding the reader takes from PL to augment his/her learning bank, Milton uses what Douglas Bush refers to as "the classical doctrine of delightful teaching," one that Renaissance humanists such as Edmund Spenser (c.1552-99) and Torquato Tasso (1544-95) also employ and one that the Reformation and Counter-Reformation encourage and approve.<sup>15</sup> Such delightful teaching by Milton reminds anew or instructs readers of a conscience implanted within them by God. Certainly, PL, as didactic epic, teaches readers the importance of listening to the promptings of conscience especially in choices that determine eternal destiny. Milton as student and teacher possesses awareness of the economy of learning from his

own life experiences that he incorporates into the very fabric of PL.<sup>16</sup> Only when the reader looks back on the epic as a whole does he/she recognize that Milton has woven into the structure of the text the threads of an economy of salvation as well as the reality of condemnation.

Within his presentation of an economy of salvation, Milton, employing all that classical, ecclesiastical, and Renaissance culture and tradition offer a poet, writes PL as a guide for readers, then and now. Although he prays his muse a “fit audience find, though few” (7.31), he expects seventeenth-century fit readers as well as contemporary readers to possess some philosophical awareness of the faculties of the soul—reason and will—to read his epic cogently and find his presentation an attractive inducement to virtue compared to the plight of Satan or Adam’s descendents, the Biblical failures of Books XI-XII. However, by the time a contemporary reader comes to PL, he or she may not know the terminology for the faculties of soul per se as the reader in Milton’s day understood them, and may miss what Milton has in mind for the reader of today. However, the modern reader does possess experience [my emphasis] as a guide in an awareness of delight in knowing and understanding, in the exercise of choosing among goods, i.e., the use of free choice, and in a recognition of and a possession of a spirit that in flights of speculation moves beyond the commonplace of daily events into the “what ifs” of life— the mystery of existence and personal destiny expressed in wonder. Thus, the contemporary reader, in a sense philosophically compromised according to seventeenth-century standards, compensates by learning, or by reading, or by experience where, of course, according to Aristotle all knowledge begins.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, in the economics of learning all that one learns before reading PL, or reading any major text for that matter, prepares one for reading Milton, while reading Milton prepares the reader for other literary or intellectual challenges. In time the reader comes to see how every bit of knowledge links with other forms of learning. The reader of epics recognizes that one epic prepares one for another epic such as one trip to the underworld with Odysseus reflects a similar trip with Aeneas or Dante. Consequently, the reader both experiences and discovers an economy of learning (subjective) in reading that finds application in any discipline (objective).

### **PL and its Connection to the Epic Tradition**

Reading an epic such as PL reveals a few ideas that serve as principles for an economics of knowledge (objective) and its application within the epic tradition. For example, the fact that a portion of mankind's experience finds preservation [my emphasis] in folktale, legend, and myth before it takes written form, the fact that the maturation of the epic tradition is a long process [my emphasis] that occurs over centuries first through oral recitation, then written form, the fact that a poet emulates his predecessors, often surpassing them, but at the same time producing a unique contribution [my emphasis] in epic form for mankind by using an economy of presentation gives distinctive character to any new epic. The preservation of knowledge, the process of transmission, the contribution to humanity, and the economy of presentation are four economic principles of knowledge found within the epic tradition offering a framework or a model that prepares the reader to appreciate something similar occurring in an analogous manner with PL, an epic about humanity's relationship with its Creator. If a reader discovers an economy of knowledge, learning, and presentation

along with characteristics of preservation, process, and contribution within a subject concerned with the natural order of things as in PL as epic, and if one finds a similar economy in a subject concerned with the supernatural order of things, specifically the relationship of the Creator with his creation within the epic, has the reader not found an analogous relationship so dear to philosophers? Indeed, PL offers something radically different in the epic tradition, not only a “higher Argument” of moral and spiritual heroism but a new development in the epic tradition itself—the tertiary epic. Moreover, the reader perceives that epic has moved from the natural plane of traditional heroic epic to a supernatural plane that recognizes an order of salvation and grace. Gerald Graff reminds us “that no text is an island, that every work of literature is a rejoinder in a conversation or dialogue that it presupposes but may or may not mention explicitly.”<sup>18</sup> Literature, consequently, always remains in discourse with the works of the past as each generation’s culture reads to incorporate or reject a previous generation’s literature.

Within the section about the epic, I summarize classical and Renaissance epic conventions and traditions as they develop across the centuries, and at the same time these epics and the tradition illustrate an economics of knowledge that Milton draws upon to create his epic. I review the epic tradition as only a single instance of an economics of knowledge—that of the development of the epic—but at the same time I recognize that the reader in an economics of learning connects poets one to another and recognizes their absorption of ideas from one epic to another. After the survey of epic development, I account for the place of PL within the history of primary, secondary, and tertiary epic in general.

According to Aristotle, only tragedy outranks the epic and is superior to it. At the end of the Poetics, Aristotle concludes that since tragedy attains “the poetic effect better than the epic, it will be the higher form of art.”<sup>19</sup> However, during the Renaissance, notably under the influence of its most important scholar and the father of historical criticism, Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609), who in criticism of Homer and Vergil inaugurates comparative literature, epic became more important than tragedy to some poets, and so it was for Milton. Flanagan observes that for “Milton epic was the highest type of poetry, the best art a civilization might ensure its immortality. The best of epics in turn epitomized entire civilizations by summarizing their most noble accomplishments and aspirations in one emblem of national pride.”<sup>20</sup> An epic or narrative heroic poem possesses five characteristics that suggest its importance in a debate about genre superiority: (1) it is a very long poem, (2) the epic tells a story about a serious subject, (3) a bard speaks, or a poet writes the narrative in (4) a formal, elevated, grand style about (5) a hero with responsibilities to his people.<sup>21</sup> For both hearers and readers, an epic requires attentiveness and endurance; both are rewarded by wisdom hidden in the art of elevated storytelling.

Milton’s poetry connects the reader to our great literary past—not only to Homer, Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid, and Theocritus, but also to the Hebrew poets, the Gospel writers, Apostolic Fathers, and the Renaissance poets, William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser.<sup>22</sup> Through the economics of knowledge, PL absorbs what it needs of the Classical-Renaissance epic tradition within its text to present itself to an emerging Modern Period. To read Milton is to hold culture literally and literarily in one’s hands. Yet, Milton selectively takes from the previous traditions only that which supports his

grand purpose. The rest he leaves behind so that as he surpasses his epic predecessors in the scope of his epic—addressed to all humanity—he recognizes his debt to authors who preceded him. In other words, an economic preference exists for certain ideas or characterizations that Milton selects. For example, PL in its cosmic settings of heaven, hell, and paradise depicts the awesome presence and activity of the Divine, the reality of the nearness of Holiness to humanity itself, and the self-communication of God to mankind. Just as Homer has Athena direct Odysseus and also has Thetis encourage Achilles, Vergil has Juno counsel Aeneas in classical epics. Likewise, Milton's God walks and speaks in the garden with Adam and Eve. Milton, however, portrays God as concerned with all His creation, that is, with everyone, not just heroes, but even with the reader who may be an unnamed character in Milton's epic. How quite unprepared any reader would be for such an encounter or conversation with the Divine as Milton envisions "our first Parents" (4.6) experienced, but Milton finds such encounters and conversations a part of the epic and Biblical tradition; he does not hesitate to use Divine and angelic encounters and conversations and to expand upon them because he is poet as well as teacher.

The narrative epic PL has the potential to offer a reader many insights. As Dr. Albert Labriola frequently reminds his NEH seminar students, PL possesses qualities of the indeterminate epic, a poststructural critical term that signifies the impracticality and impossibility of a stable text because of the fluidity or instability of language and meaning that occurs over the centuries.<sup>23</sup> Surely, the epic ending of PL with its many interpretations, with its uses in typology, and with a conclusion "The World was all before them" . . . (12.646) that forms a beginning for the epic struggle of each individual



or reader, speaks to indeterminacy of epic story-telling. Indeed, the art form of the epic from the time of the Homeric bards always allows for the continuation of the epic by another bard in the epic cycle. Even Vergil crafts his epic as the beginning of a Roman epic cycle continuing the Homeric story from the Fall of Troy but incorporates ideas from previous epics of Roman poets such as Ennius. Always, the epic text is complex and requires a reading that embraces many levels such as the literal, poetic, historical, psychological, cosmological, and theological so that each level connects PL to the poetry that precedes it. Ultimately, the reader recognizes in the text's indeterminacy and its relationship to the epics that go before it the economy of knowledge, for what mankind produces, discovers, invents, and writes goes into a universal bank of knowledge that over time finds a use somewhere and at some time. For instance, unknown manuscripts that show up unexpectedly, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls or the lost Journal of Meriwether Lewis, enhance our knowledge of the past, give us clues we have missed, and open our minds to understanding the complexities of a previous time. Written records make themselves known at appropriate times in history. Milton himself places much of what he has read into encyclopedic similes (Satan uses them, the Father does not) that connects his epic with the classical and Renaissance tradition. Everything somehow connects with other shreds of learning forming a mosaic of meaning for understanding his epic in the light of previous ones. The careful reader taps into the mosaic of meaning, and it becomes, then, a mosaic of learning with an additional opportunity to unify bits and pieces of intellectual "stuff" acquired in the educational process.

Moreover, the thoughtful reader comes to recognize in the epic tradition something of "the best that is known and thought in the world," an idea Matthew Arnold

urges of literary criticism in his essay “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1864, 1865).<sup>24</sup> Arnold holds that literature often “creates a current of true and fresh ideas,”<sup>25</sup> a benefit in any economy of knowledge for the reader/student who enjoys the text’s critical discussions. When such a process of leaning, understanding, and enjoying occurs in regard to PL, the student comes to understand why Milton remains in the canon and why he remains important for subsequent poets and writers in later generations. Literature and life need him. In truth, no poet can replace him.

Milton speaks with the dignified voice of the epic poet in a style replete with unfamiliar words, constructions, and names from Biblical, classical, and ancient history that give a credibility of grave importance to his narration. This voice sets him apart from scholars of disciplines who use the formal language of philosophy, theology, or criticism that has a long history within their disciplines, often from the thought of Plato and Aristotle who also use formal language to address reality revealing questions that cause readers existential angst. Actually, the reader may come to know that scholars such as Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), Paul Tillich (d.1965), and Karl Rahner (d.1984) examine similar philosophical and theological issues bearing on good and evil that Milton addresses, articulating responses for postmodern questions that contemporary readers of PL ask. However, these scholars do not speak with the narrative voice of an epic poet rich in allusions, in poetic constructions, and in memorable lines that carry the weight of a long literary tradition into the present, reaching into the heart, spirit and mind of readers.

In light of a process recognized through an economy of personal learning and presentation, the reader discovers that the primary epic itself evolves from folk epic to its

written counterpart. In fact, one can even think in terms of the economics of epic transmission. The transformation from storytelling to written epic requires centuries of an oral culture with each generation enriching the oral tradition. Ultimately, poets preserve that oral tradition with primary epic, a poem written to maintain the oral cultural narrative in a stable form. David Gaunt recalls the purpose of primary epic as “that type of poetry which stems directly from heroic deeds and is composed in the first instance in order that such deeds may not be forgotten.”<sup>26</sup> Such a process occurs with the epic of Gilgamesh. After three thousand years as oral poetry, Gilgamesh, the tale of the heroic adventures of a Sumerian king in search of eternal life, becomes the first written epic of Mesopotamian civilization around 1000 BC. Similar phenomena occur with the Iliad and the Odyssey in Greece between 850-750 BC, Beowulf in Anglo-Saxon England discovered in a tenth-century manuscript, the Chanson de Roland of early twelfth-century France, the Nibelungenlied of thirteenth-century Germany, and the Poema del Cid of twelfth-century Spain. The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, first as oral and then as written poetry, reach into the heart of human misery—the “matter-of-fact despair” noted by C. S. Lewis.”<sup>27</sup> Each epic in the oral tradition and in its primary form adds to an awareness of the anguish, suffering, and mortality of humanity.

After Hesiod and by the time of Homer, the epic has developed its own characteristics. In the words of David Gaunt, “with Homer it springs into being fully formed, mature in its techniques, and presenting the reader or listener a complete world of its own, three dimensional and alive.”<sup>28</sup> Among the techniques the epic bard uses are poetic formulas that he inserts into appropriate places in the hexameter line such as epithets, usually an adjective and noun that are interchangeable, as in “swift-footed

Achilles” and longer formulas that occur repeatedly for the preparation of meals and the arming for battle that require longer blocks of narrative. The poet knows the formulas so well he inserts a formula into his recitation whenever necessary, especially if he experiences a loss of words, or if he needs to regain his train of thought. The poet did not memorize the story but the formulas so that each re-telling of the event by a bard became a new creation.

When epic tradition matures, another form, the secondary epic or literary epic, develops as the work of an individual poet who may alter an existing tradition, myth, or legend. In other words, the poet creates an epic world based on his interpretation of a given tradition that he may manipulate for the economy of his presentation and for the mind of his reader. About 700 BC, the Boeotian poet Hesiod (c 750-650 BC) composed the Theogony in which he is the first to narrate the epic theme of creation in genealogical terms. Hesiod’s mythic poem drawing on perhaps the same epic tradition as Homer, an idea suggested by R. M. Frazer,<sup>29</sup> explains how the universe, gods, and humanity came to exist. Strongly influenced by the Succession Myth of the Babylonian epic Enuma Elish (When on High) composed sometime after 1100 BC, by the Hittite myths known as the Kingship in Heaven that portray a god involved in self-castration and the Song of Ullikummi about the defeat of one god by another, and by the Phoenician (Canaanites) myths about El and Baal, Hesiod, who like Milton introduces autobiographical details into his proemium, opens his epic with an account of the Muses who “breathed a divine voice into me to sing of what will be and what was before” (31-32).

Hesiod next moves to the opening phrase, an epic formula that serves also as an invocation to the Muse used by epic poets in some form before and after him. For the

Theogony Hesiod chooses: “O Muses . . . tell me/from the beginning” (114-115). Homer in the Iliad has the poet begin: “Sing, goddess” (1.3), while in the Odyssey the bard says: “Tell me Muse” (1.3). Vergil in the Aeneid writes “Tell me the causes now, O Muse” (1.3), and in PL the invocation becomes “Sing Heav’nly Muse” (1.6).<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Lucretius in De Rerum Natura opens his Roman epic with an invocation to his muse Venus, the mother of Aeneas, and “a personification of creative force” (1.2).<sup>31</sup> Likewise, in Book I of PL Milton invokes his Muse to assist him in his “advent’rous Song” that it may “soar / Above the Aonia Mount” (1.15), also known as Mount Helicon and an important allusion to the Muses of Aonia who assisted Hesiod, indicating that PL lies in the classical tradition of Greece rather than in the tradition of Vergilian Rome.

Just as Guillaume Salluste Sieur Du Bartas writes in Divine Weeks and Works about his muse, so too does Milton write about his muse in the proem to Book VII. Du Bartas finally names his muse Urania, the patron of astronomy, displacing Calliope the usual Muse that epic poets invoke when they call upon the Muse. However, Milton associates Urania with Biblical tradition. She does not descend from Mount Helicon, where the Muses of Hesiod live, but from Heaven where she has existed before Muses begin their work with poets. Milton like Torquato Tasso and Du Bartas before him also invokes the Spirit as well as Urania. Readers wonder if Urania and the Spirit called upon “with mighty wings outspread” (I.20) in the proem to Book I and the “Sing Heav’nly Muse” (I.6) are one and the same muse or two entirely different ones, while Miltonists also ask what the sense of Spirit meant to Milton. Although scholars have not resolved either question, their solutions intrigue the reader and add other possible readings to the “indeterminate epic.”<sup>32</sup>

When the epic genre has stability, new and different motifs contribute to its richness. The journey of Jason and his companions in search of the Golden Fleece with the help of Medea shapes the Argonautica, the literary epic of Apollonius of Rhodes in the third century BC that introduces dark and sinister forces into the epic. Titus Lucretius (c.99-c.55 BC) writes De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things) an unfinished didactic epic in six books that explains and defends the physical system of the universe and the moral philosophy of Epicurus who wishes to free mankind from fear of death and of the gods. Tradition attempts to link Lucretius and Vergil in a phrase from Donatus, whom scholars now agree remains a questionable biographer of Vergil, but who recounts that Vergil assumes the toga at age seventeen on the very day and in the very year that Lucretius died.<sup>33</sup> The Roman literary epic, Aeneid, written by Vergil (70-19 BC)<sup>34</sup> between 29-19 BC, takes the Greek epic as its pattern with the presence of gods, goddesses, and their action on behalf of heroes whose suffering and responsibilities affect the reader with cosmic, timeless melancholy of the human situation. Yet, the Aeneid likewise draws upon the Roman history of Ennius (239-169 BC) from his epic the Annales, an epic poem of eighteen books written in hexameters similar to Greek epic, that chronicles the history of Rome from the time of Aeneas until almost the death of Ennius. Dante (1265-1321) in The Divine Comedy draws on the Aeneid, especially Book VI, for the geography of the underworld. Dante's Hell, however, needs both a physical and a moral geography to accommodate unrepentant sinners. As Dante the Pilgrim journeys through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, Dante the poet introduces classical, historical, and biblical personages and analogues into an epic about sin, virtue, and salvation. On Dante the Pilgrim's heroic quest, Vergil, who reminds readers of

Aeneas and his difficult journey from Troy to Rome, becomes Dante's first guide telling him often of the pietas one owes to ancestors similar to that practiced by pious Aeneas. Ultimately, Beatrice replaces Dido whose influence over Aeneas sways him from his vocation to empire. Beatrice becomes the guide who leads the Pilgrim Dante to his third guide, Bernard of Clairvaux, the mystic monk who prepares Dante for the presence of the Divine. Later as epic narrative evolves, Guillaume Salluste Sieur du Bartas (1544-90) takes creation itself as his epic topic in La Semaine (1578). Finally, Joshua Sylvester (c.1563-1618), translator of du Bartas, in Divine Weeks and Works (1605) offers a hexameral epic model in English for Milton, who is heir apparent to a rich number of epic poets and their works that he incorporates into his epic.

Milton's seventeenth-century English epic connects his work to the themes of previous epic cultures. He draws on the texts of classical Greece and Rome (military conquest, quests, exile, friendship, anger, the underworld), alludes to twelfth-century Spain (jealousy, feuds, zeal) and France (betrayal, pride), calls upon thirteenth-century Germany (romance, trickery, suspicions, revenge, tests of skill and strength) and fourteenth-century Italy (exile, guides, pilgrim journey, geography of hell, spiritual confusion), and includes the hexameral tradition of sixteenth-century France. The reader of PL also recognizes the strong influence of the Metamorphoses of Ovid (43 BC-19 AD) in the many changes Satan experiences such as a vulture (3.431), wolf (4.183), cormorant (4.196), lion (4.402), tiger (4.403), toad (4.800), mist (9.75), serpent (9. 86, 91, 182, 413, 785, et. al.). Interestingly, in his epic, Ovid begins with creation from Chaos describing the first transformation that produces an ordered universe. David Harding argues that since the Genesis account of creation is "ambiguous and vague," Milton consequently

“fills out his conception of creation with details drawn from the Metamorphoses.”<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, Professor E.M.W. Tillyard finds the influence of Statius (c. 45-c.96 AD) from his epic Thebaid (Thebais) (7.148-150) on Milton in the scene in Book IX (892-893) where Adam drops the garland he has been making for Eve as she tells him of eating the forbidden fruit. The roses wilt immediately. Likewise, in Statius’s account, Bacchus drops the thyrsus and grapes fall from his head.<sup>36</sup> The appropriations of Milton from the epics of his precursors delight the reader because he or she sees other epics reflected in PL, marveling and enjoying the old found in the new epic— surely an exemplification of the economics of learning.

PL formed with primary and secondary epics in mind bears a relationship to its Anglo-Saxon epic predecessor for an economy of message and presentation. Whereas the Anglo Saxon hero, Beowulf, fights with the powers of darkness, Milton’s epic demonstrates the power of God Himself, the power of good and evil, the effects of disobedience and sin, the effects of grace and virtue. Inspired by his muse and learned in epic tradition, Milton absorbs past literary heritage into his epic to instruct, see, and tell “Of things invisible to mortal sight” (3.55) that he may influence and shape his reader to recognize the Divine in a sacred place, a sacred time, and an a sacred encounter.

However, because PL contains elements of the Vergilian, hexameral, and Biblical types of epic within itself, Milton’s epic constitutes another stage, the tertiary, in epic development. Alastair Fowler suggests the secondary epic “may savor the primary kind aesthetically, and so in a sense ‘reinterpret’ it,” but for him the tertiary epic develops only when a poet “takes up a kind already secondary and applies it in quite a new way.”<sup>37</sup> Changes occur within the form of secondary epic to produce the tertiary stage such as



happens when Milton incorporates types of epic accounts within his own: the Vergilian (the narrator in the underworld and Satan's quest for empire of Books I-II), the hexameral (the creation account of Book VII), and the Biblical epic (the Scriptural events of Books XI-XII) within PL. Over time, the Vergilian epic becomes the model for an epic poet to imitate especially under the Renaissance influence of Scaliger who prefers Vergil over Homer. However, when scholars learn more concerning primary epic, as for example, what the studies of Milman Parry (1920's) reveal about the function in oral epic of the Homeric epithets, critics revalue primary and secondary epic historically and developmentally. Literary epic is then not static but evolving, and so scholars recognize another stage, the tertiary. Fowler observes that PL "is tertiary in that it treats Virgilian motifs antiheroically and reduces them to subsidiary functions within a form of larger import. By contrast, Milton's epic reflects Christian values, achieving heroism and satisfying divine wrath differently from any pagan epic."<sup>38</sup> In the tertiary epic, action is more internal than external as occurs in PL. Consequently, even the bipartite structure of the literary epic, recognized and defined since the Renaissance and re-worked by Lewis in the first half of the twentieth century in A Preface to Paradise Lost, gives place in the second half of the century to a more nuanced understanding of what Milton accomplishes in the tertiary stage of epic formulation.

### **Miltonic Style**

C.S. Lewis recognizes the need of one poet to form his style by using elements of previous epic poets. Lewis recognizes that "older critics divided Epic into Primitive and Artificial, which is unsatisfactory, because no surviving ancient poetry is really primitive and all poetry is in some sense artificial."<sup>39</sup> Lewis prefers a division of epic "into

Primary Epic and Secondary Epic—the adjectives being purely chronological and implying no judgements of value.”<sup>40</sup> A poet crafts secondary epic with the primary tradition in mind. Always recognizing the influence as well as his debt to the oral poets preceding him, the poet historically takes both universal and particular ideas from his predecessors to create an epic grander than his literary ancestors produced as Vergil first did with Homer, Dante with Vergil, and Milton with Dante. In that structuring, Lewis notes that “the Secondary epic aims at an even higher solemnity than the Primary, but it has lost all those external aids to solemnity which the Primary enjoyed.”<sup>41</sup> Yet, the poet who creates a secondary epic for a contemporary person to read at a desk, on an airplane, or in a subway must rely on his writing to create “of itself what the whole occasion helped to do for Homer. The Virgilian and Miltonic style is there to compensate for—to counteract—the privacy and informality of silent reading.”<sup>42</sup> Of course, the reader of PL needs to factor Milton’s style into the reading to enrich that experience.

What then is Milton’s grand style and what purpose does it serve? Lewis attributes Milton’s “grandeur” to three factors: his “use of slightly unfamiliar words and constructions, including archaisms,” his “use of proper names . . . names of splendid, remote, terrible, voluptuous, or celebrated things,” and his “his commonsense experience (light, darkness, storm, flowers, jewels, sexual love, and the like), but all over-topped and ‘managed’ with an air of magnanimous austerity.”<sup>43</sup> Within this same paragraph, Lewis remarks on Milton’s “manipulation of his readers—how he sweeps us along as though we were attending an actual recitation and nowhere allows us to settle down and luxuriate on any one line or paragraph.” Noting that it is a commonplace “to speak of Milton’s style as organ music,” Lewis prefers “to regard the reader as the organ and Milton as the

organist.”<sup>44</sup> Returning to his metaphor a few pages later, he observes: “We are his organ: when he appears to be describing Paradise he is in fact drawing out the Paradisal Stop in us.”<sup>45</sup> Lewis, returning to the relationship of Milton’s style and its effect on the reader in a subsequent chapter, urges readers to accept the style in a positive rather than a negative way because Milton writes as he does for the sake of his readers. Lewis, in defense of the epic tradition, reminds and teaches us about epic and its poet:

He makes his epic a rite so that we may share in it; the more ritual it becomes, the more we are elevated to the rank of participants. Precisely because the poet appears not as a private person, but as a Hierophant or Choregus, we are summoned not to hear what one particular man thought and felt about the Fall, but to take part, under his leadership, in a great mimetic dance of all Christendom ourselves soaring and ruining (sic running) from heaven, ourselves enacting Hell and Paradise, the Fall and the repentance.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, Lewis explains that “when we are caught up into the experience which a ‘grand’ style communicates, we are in a sense no longer conscious of the style”<sup>47</sup> because, as he reminds us, “Urania had him in hand.” The reader, then, studies “what the poet, with his singing robes about him, has given us.”<sup>48</sup> Before reader-response gained critical attention, Lewis in 1942 recognizes the relationship between Milton and his reader and interprets how Milton’s style influences what Milton wants to occur in his reader.

However, since Milton wrote his epic in English, PL has become a national poem for his countrymen, and indeed, like the earlier English epic Beowulf, PL manifests elements that Professor Lewis designates sop and sarlic (true and tragic) that connect Milton’s great poem with earlier Anglo-Saxon literature and culture. Lewis adds that of all court poetry, the epic understood in all its early primitiveness from classical to Anglo-Saxon England, was the “loftiest and gravest,” and this “is not irrelevant.” Epic association “with the heroic court” brought “into Epic Poetry a quality which survives,

with strange transformations and enrichments, down to Milton's own time, and it is a quality which moderns find difficult to understand."<sup>49</sup> Additionally, Lewis stresses the solemnity characteristic of both the epic and the telling of the epic. He observes: "The Epic does not decline from the lay in the heroic court to the Miltonic level, but rises; it accumulates and enriches solemnity as the centuries proceed."<sup>50</sup> The language of the epic needs to be "familiar in the sense of being expected," yet "it must not be familiar in the sense of being colloquial or commonplace."<sup>51</sup> Thus, the epic requires a special type of poetic diction that adds to its solemnity. Consequently, in setting his epic in the Court of Heaven and the Garden of Eden, Milton crafts an epic applicable to mankind that his narrator tells in the dignified language of God, the instructive language of angels, and intimate language of man and woman as well as the respectful language of humanity to the Divine and his ambassadors. The poet speaks not just to members of the court or the citizens of a particular country or culture but to humanity. He engages his readers in the solemn business of redemption and salvation.

### **A Few Miltonic Critics**

Certainly, Milton provokes strong emotions in readers and scholars either because of ideas or style reflected in the epic. His defenders and opponents contributed over the centuries to making him known or hated. One has only to note the vast Milton research in scholarly journals or read negative criticism such as that offered by T. S. Eliot who finds Milton as a man "antipathetic." Indeed for Eliot, from the viewpoint of a moralist, of a theologian, of a psychologist, of a political philosopher, or of "ordinary standards of likeableness in human beings, Milton is unsatisfactory."<sup>52</sup> As a poet, he is a master of sound, but he found Milton the poet unsatisfactory as well, for he dissociated poetic

language from ordinary language. In an essay of 1921, "The Metaphysical Poets," Eliot accuses Milton of a "dissociation of sensibility," the dissociation of the intellect from emotion and sensibility, while in "A Note on the Verse of John Milton," originally published in 1936, Eliot observes that "there is more of "Milton's influence in the badness of bad verse of the eighteenth century than of anybody's else. . . .Milton remains "an influence against which we still have to struggle."<sup>53</sup> In a later essay (1947), Eliot revises some of his earlier opinions about Milton.

Additionally, in the middle the twentieth century scholars such as J. B. Broadbent (1960), William Empson (1965), John Peter (1960), and A. J. A. Waldock (1947) add to the negatives against Milton. They criticize him for an inadequate characterization of God as unlikable, as an uninteresting tyrannical schoolmaster, and find fault, among many others, with Milton's depiction of angels such as the knowledge of Abdiel versus that of the other rebellious angels (Peter, Waldock), the ineffectiveness of Gabriel in the War in Heaven and in protecting Adam and Eve (Peter), the absurdity of sentries in Paradise who fail to protect Adam and Eve, and Satan's release after arrest (Broadbent), and the heresies Milton committed in affirming a similar nature between men and angels in that they eat and have sexual desires (Broadbent, Peter, Waldock).

Empson, the most colorful and vehement of the critics, compares Milton's God to Communist Russia's Dictator Joseph Stalin, known for ruthlessness in destroying his enemies, in "their patience under an appearance of roughness, the same flashes of joviality, the same thorough unscrupulousness, the same real bad temper."<sup>54</sup> Thus, he finds Milton's God "embarrassing,"<sup>55</sup> the "traditional God of Christianity very wicked,"<sup>56</sup> and Milton's "treatment of God so strange that it rewards inquiry."<sup>57</sup> Further, Empson

believes that God is on trial in the epic,<sup>58</sup> that “Milton could never let the Father appear soft,”<sup>59</sup> and God’s finest moment occurs when he announces that he will give his throne to the Son (III.305).<sup>60</sup> Empson thinks attackers of the poem should take “one step further” and adopt “the manly and appreciative attitude of Blake and Shelley, who said that the reason why the poem is so good is that it makes God so bad.”<sup>61</sup> Readers need to factor negative criticism into their reading so that they have an informed opinion about the text, the characterization of the Father, and Milton’s Christianity.

Harold Bloom holds that the greatest poets—Homer, Isaiah, Lucretius, Dante, and Shakespeare—lived before Cartesian rationalism burst upon the Modern Period. These greatest poets challenge all post-Enlightenment poets except Milton, Goethe and Hugo, the strongest of all post-Enlightenment poets. Bloom asserts that “weak as they seem” beside the greatest poets, they “were the most triumphant of modern wrestlers with the dead.”<sup>62</sup> In his analysis of Milton, Bloom cites the criticism of Samuel Johnson (1709) who, for Bloom, was “the greatest critic in the language” and “the first great diagnostician of the malady of poetic influence”<sup>63</sup> and William Hazlitt (1834-1913) who reveals Milton’s intellectual and poetic strength in competition with his predecessors:

To Milton all fallen experience had its inevitable foundation in loss, and paradise could be regained only by One Greater Man, and not by any poet whatsoever. Yet Milton’s own Great Original, as he confessed to Dryden, was Spenser, who allows his Colin a Poet’s Paradise in Book VI of The Faerie Queene. Milton—as both Johnson and Hazlitt emphasize—was incapable of suffering the anxiety of influence, unlike all of his descendants. Johnson insisted that, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton was the least indebted, adding: ‘He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thought or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them.’ Hazlitt, in a lecture heard by Keats—an influence upon Keats’s subsequent notion of Negative Capability—remarked upon Milton’s positive capability for ingesting his precursors: ‘In reading his

works, we feel ourselves under the influence of a mighty intellect, that the nearer it approaches to others, becomes more distinct from them.’<sup>64</sup>

Bloom notes that Milton “haunted” eighteenth-century poets such as William Collins (1721-59) or William Cowper (1731-1800) for whom he became Blake’s “Tyger, the Covering Cherub, blocking a new voice from entering the Poet’s Paradise.”<sup>65</sup> The Covering Cherub comes from the Book of Genesis (3:24) where the Angels of God, the cherubim, stand with a “flaming and turning” sword that guards “the way to the tree of life” east of Eden as Adam and Eve leave.

Bloom understands that from the time of Homer until the time of Ben Jonson, poets consider poetic influence” as something like a “filial relationship” with the poets who preceded them. With the post-Enlightenment, however, “sonship” gives way to “poetic influence.”<sup>66</sup> Milton, the father of post-Enlightenment poetry, in his successful struggle with his classical and Renaissance competition causes succeeding poets great anxiety that takes form as melancholy or depression since they measure their work against that of dead poets whose works cause Moderns to stumble and re-value their own work.

Unfortunately, Milton cannot refute antagonists who draw attention to problems with his epic or with himself. Yet, adversarial Milton scholars hold a necessary place in the literary community for they shine their scholarship on the shadow side of Milton or his work causing other scholars to propose counter arguments. Attacked across the centuries, Milton has had apt defenders. Is this not another aspect of the economics of knowledge and of learning that over time the criticized find refutation and the critical receives admonition or support? Readers who complain of Milton’s difficult poetry find ample reward in reading his scholars, favorable or unfavorable. They have read the same

text as the reader, but critics supply other perspectives to the indeterminate epic — literary, historical, political, or theological—that enrich the literary community and the reader.

Milton, too, recognizes his father figures from the past, Homer, Vergil, and Dante, by incorporating many of their themes and structures into his epic, but he alters them to fit his purpose. For example, Homer's Odysseus visits the underworld meeting the shades whom he has known, Dante as pilgrim traverses and notes the geography of Hell where he converses with famous Florentines, but Milton's Hell exists for rebel angels who construct there a world of their own just as God creates His world for mankind. Milton also listens to the demands of the historical moment—parliamentary debates, military unrest, a new economic globalization as England enters into trade agreements with other nations such as the Dutch, and colonization schemes—that he reflects in the first two books of PL in the debates of Satan and his cohorts. Yet, Milton conceives an epic of a different sort than his predecessors. Assisted by his “Celestial Patroness” who visits him nightly to dictate while he sleeps or inspires his “unpremeditated Verse” (9.24), Milton declares that his epic will contend with spiritual heroism rather than physical heroism on the battlefield, at jousts, or tournaments.

In the chapters that follow, I investigate the “higher Argument” (9.42) that Milton proposes in the Proem to Book IX by first examining his sense of a divine purpose in his life. Milton saw himself gifted with intellectual and poetic powers that urged him to write a national epic about relationships, especially of creature to the Creator. I believe he desires his reader to find within the argument for spiritual heroism—“the better fortitude / Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom / Unsung” (9.31-32) and in the



concept of the Just Man (11.681)—a model for gracious, obedient living exemplified by the obedience of Abdiel, Noah, Christ, and of a repentant Adam and Eve who consent to the responsibility required by existence, rather than to a responsibility demanded by secular values such as Aeneas exercised. On all levels—physical, psychological, moral, creative, intellectual, and spiritual—and in varied dimensions of relationships with nature, humanity, and the Divine, Milton asks of his reader, as does Scripture, a higher form of heroism. In other words, Milton hopes readers choose the “higher Argument” to live within an economy of salvation whereby the gift of grace leads them on an epic journey of spiritual heroism, never sung by earthly poets in “singing robes,” but sung nonetheless for them somehow in the life and spirit of the Just Man when “God shall be All in All” (3.350).

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Fish, Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997) 1.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen B. Dobranski, "Milton's social life." The Cambridge Companion to Milton, ed. Dennis Danielson, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Cambridge, UP, 2006) 10.

<sup>3</sup> See Christopher Hill and Edmund Dell, The Good Old Cause: The English Revolution of 1640-1660 Its Causes, Course and Consequences, Revised 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Cass and Co., 1969) where he "argues that the 17<sup>th</sup> century English Revolution marked the transition from mediaeval to modern English society" 20.

<sup>4</sup> John T. Shawcross, "The Higher Wisdom:" Achievements of the Left Hand, eds., Michael Lieb and John Shawcross (Amherst: U Of Massachusetts Press, 1974) 155. Shawcross observes that "Milton's contribution to political theory appears in points of counsel which underpin the overt discussion of kingship:

1. educate man to judge more objectively, without the false thinking of custom or self interest,
2. educate man in discrimination of ideas and action and in self-discipline,
3. protect the natural rights of all men,
4. develop a proper regard of each man for every other
5. ensure action by a wide spectrum of all men,
6. develop a reliance on the future, though unknown, through such assurances as an instrument of government,
7. remove the fears of the future by developing a proper regard for self in each man,
8. aim for the ideal state; though it may not be attainable, such belief will eventually achieve more.

In this, it seems to me Milton is in agreement with modern political theorists like Jacques Ellul who saw the answer to the world's political dilemma in a re- formation of the democratic citizen, not of institutions" 155.

<sup>5</sup> John T. Shawcross, John Milton and Influence (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1991) 144.

<sup>6</sup> Shawcross, John Milton and Influence 150.

<sup>7</sup> One of the first principles of an economy in terms of social justice is that an economy exists in service to the people affected by it, and not the people in service to the economy. Underlying the concept of economy are questions of value that affect all aspects of life.

<sup>8</sup> The idea or use of economics in literature is certainly not new. Economics in various forms appears when one least expects it. For example, John S. Diekhoff on page

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119 in Milton's Paradise Lost (New York: Columbia UP, 1946) uses "narrative economy" for Milton's creation of "rumors" in heaven to account for a sequence of events, while Richard H. Brodhead writes of a "new literary economy" in "Starting Out in the 1860's" in Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) where the "reading culture centered on the story-paper," what we now call the Sunday Funnies. Such writing generates "a good living" by depicting the "exotic and elaborately melodramatic" under a system that he calls the "economics of authorship" 99.

<sup>9</sup> Roy Flannagan, "Introduction to Paradise Lost" in The Riverside Milton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) 312.

<sup>10</sup> See Alastair Fowler, "Introduction to Paradise Lost" in The Poems of John Milton, eds., John Carey and Alastair Fowler (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972) where he cites the numerological work of Gunnar Qvarnstrom in Poetry and Numbers who in counting lines discovered that in Ed I the "numerological centre" of PL occurs when Christ "ascends his triumphal chariot." Qvarnstrom also "draws attention, e.g., to Christ's two speeches at the very centre of the poem (vi. 723-45, 801-23), both of them 23 lines long. Fowler declares "it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of this observation which lends point to a whole series of other symmetries about the midpoint of poem" 441.

<sup>11</sup> John T. Shawcross, With Mortal Voice: The Creation of Paradise Lost (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1982) 42-43.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Lewalski, "The genres of Paradise Lost," The Cambridge Companion to Milton, ed. Dennis Danielson (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006) 113.

<sup>13</sup> See the article on "Reason" by Willis Monie in A Milton Encyclopedia, ed. William B. Hunter, 9 vols. (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1979) 8:96-97.

<sup>14</sup> In terms of what conscience is Milton echoes Scholastic philosophers such as St. Thomas Aquinas who did not see conscience as a separate faculty of the soul but held that conscience was nothing more than reason acting in a moral capacity efficiently using the habit of first principles or synderesis. See St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica I, 79, a.13, ad 3 in Great Books of the Western World, ed. Robert M. Hutchins, vol. 19 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952) 426-427.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Bush, "Paradise Lost," A Milton Encyclopedia, 6:55.

<sup>16</sup> In PL Milton gave as his "great Argument" to "assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men" (1.56-57). The reader learns that included in this justification are attributes given to man and woman at creation of conscience, right reason, and freedom to choose right or wrong. Actually, conscience is nothing more than intellect reflecting on a moral choice. Thus, a created person possesses two faculties of soul—intellect and will—each with a proper object: the intellect wants truth and likes to

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reason about reality, while the will desires or is attracted by and to goodness or love. Without these attributes man cannot be rational.

<sup>17</sup> See Aristotle, The Soul (De Anima): III, 7 (431<sup>a</sup>16). See also St. Thomas Aquinas, The Summa Theologica: I, 84, a.7 in Great Books of the Western World, ed. Robert M. Hutchins, vol 19 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952) 449.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Graff, "Introduction: The Humanist Myth," in Professing Literature: An Institutional History (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989)10.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, Poetics, in The Complete Works of Aristotle, ed. and trans. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984)1462<sup>b</sup>13-15.

<sup>20</sup> Flanagan 297.

<sup>21</sup> See M. H. Abrams, "Epic," A Glossary of Literary Terms (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1988) 76-78.

<sup>22</sup> C. S. Lewis voiced a similar thought in An Experiment in Criticism quoted by A. N. Wilson in C. S. Lewis: A Biography (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990): "But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like a night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes (sic), but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do" 289.

<sup>23</sup> A.C. Labriola, "Paradise Lost and the Contemporary Reader." NEH Summer Seminar (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 1993) July 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864, 1865): Victorian Prose and Poetry, eds., Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford UP, 1973) 223.

<sup>25</sup> Trilling and Bloom 224.

<sup>26</sup> David Gaunt, "Epic Poetry," Greek and Latin Literature: A Comparative Study, ed. John Higgenbottom (London: Methuen, 1969) 164.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis 31. Lewis previously had written: "an inch beneath the bright surface of Homer we find not melancholy but despair" 30.

<sup>28</sup> Gaunt 162.

<sup>29</sup> R. M Frazer, The Poems of Hesiod (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1983) 6.

<sup>30</sup> Hesiod, Theogony, trans. R. M. Frazer (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1983). Homer, The Iliad, trans. Martin Hammond (London: Penguin Books, 1987). Robert

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Fagles in his translation of the Iliad (London: Penguin Books, 1990, 77) has the poet begin with “Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles.” Homer, The Odyssey, trans. E. Vieu., Revised by D. C. H. Vieu (London: Penguin Books, 1991). Virgil, The Aeneid, trans Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

<sup>31</sup> Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, Introduction and Commentary, eds. William Ellery Leonard and Stanley Barney Smith (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1970) I.1-2, (197). Sir Ronald Melville in his verse translation of Lucretius, On the Nature of the Universe (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 3, begins the epic “O mother of the Roman race, /delight of men and gods, Venus most bountiful” . . . (1-2). R.E. Latham begins his prose translation of the epic of Lucretius, On the Nature of the Universe (London: Penguin, 1981) with “Mother of Aeneas and his race, delight of men and gods, life-giving Venus” . . . . 27.

<sup>32</sup> See John M. Steadman’s article “Urania” in A Milton Encyclopedia, 8:106-113. See also the reference to John Spencer Hill’s distinction between Muse and Spirit in John Milton: Poet, Priest and Prophet (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979) 109-113.

<sup>33</sup> Leonard, General Introduction to De Rerum Natura, 5.

<sup>34</sup> The spelling of Vergil according to Dr. J. Clack of the Classics Department of Duquesne is not arbitrary. He teaches that Vergil is the proper spelling, that the British spelling Virgil is “wrong,” and that “Virgil” probably has something to do with the fact that “vir” in Latin translates “man.”

<sup>35</sup> David P. Harding, Milton and the Renaissance Ovid (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1946) 67-68. See also Richard J. DuRocher, Milton and Ovid (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) who indicates how he differs from Harding 18.

<sup>36</sup> E.M.W. Tillyard, Studies in Milton (New York: Macmillan, 1951) 170. See also C. S. Lewis. The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) where he traces a divinity to the fourth Book of the Thebaid by Statius where “he [Statius] alludes to a deity he will not name— ‘the sovereign of the threefold world (516). The same anonymous power is probably meant in Lucan’s Pharsalia (VI, 744) where the witch, conjuring a reluctant ghost into the corpse, threatens it with Him

quo numquam terra vocato

Non concussa tremit, qui Gorgona cernit apertam.

Lewis translates the Latin as “At whose pronounced name earth never failed To tremble, who alone dares sees unveiled The Gorgon’s face.” Lewis adds that “Lactantius in his commentary on the Thebaid says that Statius ‘means demiourgon, the god whose name it is unlawful to know.’ This is plain sailing: the demiurge (workman being the Creator in the Timaeus. But there are two variants in the manuscripts; one is demogorgona, the other demogorgon. From the latter of these corruptions later ages evolved a completely

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new deity, Demogorgon, who was to enjoy a distinguished literary career in Boccaccio's Genealogy of the Gods, in Spenser, in Milton, and in Shelley. This is perhaps the only time a scribal blunder underwent an apotheosis" (39-40).

<sup>37</sup> Alastair Fowler, Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982) 163-162: first part of the quotation comes from 163, while the second occurs on 162. See also Harold Bloom, A Map of Misreading (New York: Oxford UP, 1975) 125 where he notes that Milton in "handling of allusion" and "his revisionary stance" writes "what is in effect a tertiary epic, following after Homer in primary epic and Virgil, Ovid and Dante in secondary epic."

<sup>38</sup> Fowler 162-163.

<sup>39</sup> C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) 13.

<sup>40</sup> Lewis, Preface 13. Lewis capitalizes Primitive, Artificial, Primary, Secondary, and epic when used as in Primary Epic.

<sup>41</sup> Lewis, Preface 40.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, Preface 40.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis, Preface 41.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis, Preface 41.

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, Preface 49.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis, Preface 60.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, Preface 61.

<sup>48</sup> Lewis, Preface 92.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis, Preface 16..

<sup>50</sup> Lewis, Preface 18.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis, Preface 21.

<sup>52</sup> T. S. Eliot, "A Note on the Verse of John Milton," Milton: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Louis L. Martz (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966) 12.

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<sup>53</sup> Eliot, "A Note on the Verse of John Milton," 12-13. See The Oxford Companion to English Literature, ed. Margaret Drabble, Revised Edition (New York: Oxford UP, 1995) 280 for a longer discussion of Dissociation of Sensibility.

<sup>54</sup> William Empson, Milton's God (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965) 146.

<sup>55</sup> Empson 9.

<sup>56</sup> Empson 10.

<sup>57</sup> Empson 91.

<sup>58</sup> Empson 94.

<sup>59</sup> Empson 136.

<sup>60</sup> Empson 137.

<sup>61</sup> Empson 13.

<sup>62</sup> Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry (New York: Oxford UP, 1973) 72.

See also M. H. Abrams, "Influence and the anxiety of Influence," in A Glossary of Literary Terms where he summarizes Bloom's theory. 124-126.

<sup>63</sup> Bloom 28.

<sup>64</sup> Bloom 34.

<sup>65</sup> Bloom 35.

<sup>66</sup> Bloom 26.

# Chapter II

## The Sacred Calling of John Milton

**Overview:** This chapter has three sections. First, I mention the significance of relationships in PL. Second, I examine two opposing opinions about the date when Milton decided against Episcopal priesthood, and summarize autobiographical elements from Milton's writings especially RCG that indicate his sense of a divine calling or purpose and a necessity for using his talents in service to God and mankind. Third, I refer to the disagreement between Professors Grierson and Tillyard regarding Milton's prophetic powers in PL and cite a few scholars such as William Kerrigan, Joseph Wittreich, John S. Hill, and Michael Lieb who recognize both a sacred calling and elements of the sacred in Milton's work, particularly his long epic.

### **The Importance of Relationships in PL**

A triple relationship exists between what John Milton (1608-1674) understood of himself, his life's work, and Paradise Lost (PL) (1667) in terms of the Sacred, between himself and readers of his epic, and between his readers and the Divine, for within the text of his epic he indirectly calls readers to a relationship with God as they enter into the drama of the great Fall of their ancient "Grand Parents" from grace. Such a triple relationship grounds Milton's epic, forms a foundation for the structure of the text, and relates the Divine, the poet, and the reader, for as John Shawcross observes "the theme of the poem is Love."<sup>1</sup> Certainly, long before Milton writes PL, he experiences the influence of the Sacred, the value of learning, the magnetism of friendship, the attraction of the feminine, the forces of history, politics, and culture—all relationships that find reflection within his epic. Indeed, one may say that the importance of relationships forms a subtext of the epic as in the act of creation human spirit incarnates in body in order to



learn about giving and receiving love, while the Incarnation of God as Man reveals the greatest love of all.

Without a doubt, during his formative years Milton recognizes evidence of his literary aptitude and talent for poetry and prose, plans a great literary work early in his career, and senses that he has a calling to use his talents in service to God and for his countrymen. His talent thus brings him into a unique personal relationship with the Divine as he develops and uses his genius and gifts and finds a literary relationship not only with his countrymen but also with all who read his epic. PL deserves a place among the world's sacred documents, for it introduces readers of all cultures to the possibility of an experience of the Divine who in creation and in Milton's poetry reveals Himself in self-communication to mankind. The certitude Milton evinces that he has a literary mission to fulfill also needs recognition for it bears on the quality of his self-definition that results in the richness of his epic and his relationship to his reader.

All religious traditions understand that in the depths of the human spirit the Word of God speaks to humanity. Undeniably, Milton writes his epic for all mankind as his choice of subject indicates. In PL Milton sets up a significant polarity between a reader's experience of the transcendent Divine and a reader's anthropological identification with mankind's first parents who live in the Garden of Eden where they undergo a great trial. This polarity causes a tension of identification and conflict within the reader that only the reader resolves by a conscious decision for a relationship with or without the Divine and a rejection or acceptance of obedience to right reason. From the first two books where the reader meets Satan newly cast from heaven, one experiences through narration the effects of angelic disobedience and what this means to a relationship, discovers justice in

the Father and mercy in the Son in Book III, and overhears the Father and Son discuss the redemption of humanity. The reader perceives both sides of obedience in moving through the epic. Other events such as occur in later books—the rebellion of Satan, the war between the faithless and the faithful angels, the seven days of creation, the seduction of Eve, the fall of Adam, the dream vision of Adam, and the expulsion from Paradise—reveal Milton’s understanding of the intrinsic bond that exists between the Creator and all creation, even with the reader, whom the narrator includes in the text with phrases that use the possessive “our” such as “all our woe” (2:872), “our general ancestor” (4:659), and “Our Maker” (4:746). Indeed, Milton has his narrator draw the reader into his narration and mirrors for the reader the possibility of a relationship with the Divine.

John Milton ultimately views himself as having a sacred calling to write about matters divine and human because of his self-awareness, talent, and education. Moreover, by the time he writes PL he possesses a cultivated, experienced relationship with the Divine through study and work on De Doctrina Christiana (CD). His prose and poetry become for Milton a form of priestly service, a service to which he consecrates himself by his life choices. Therefore, I next examine what Milton thinks of the divine calling he mentions in prose and poetry and discuss how this self-definition takes shape while his life progresses. Then, I examine how six scholars understand Milton’s sense of purpose. In fact, most Milton scholars in some way acknowledge that Milton has an internal awareness of a calling aligned with his talents. In the course of this chapter, I tread old paths traveled by Miltonists in order to situate Milton in a new context, that of the economics of salvation and grace.

## **Milton Defines Himself in Prose and in Poetry**

When John Milton's conscience would not permit him "to subscribe" as he states in The Reason of Church Government (RCG) (1642) to ordination in the Church of England, he chooses a twofold ministerial role through literature. First through prose, the achievements of his left hand,<sup>2</sup> and later through poetry, the work of his right hand, he writes as a theologian, a vocation to which his theological text DC discovered in 1823 and published in 1825 testifies. Second, rather than speaking from a state-sanctioned pulpit to address a congregation, Milton finds an alternative calling of writing for a congregation of readers. In PL he sets forth a gospel economy of salvation and Redemption for readers whom he wants "to teach and delight" as Sir Philip Sidney in The Defense of Poesy, relying on Aristotle, defines as the purpose of poetry.<sup>3</sup> Milton, however, went further than Sidney to enlighten and influence readers. Like Adam and Eve, readers also have a relationship with the Divine. Whether accepted or rejected the relationship between creature and Creator is by far for Milton the most important relationship that exists. Under the influence of his sacred calling as poet and the promptings of the Spirit, Milton writes as one inspired so that given a "fit audience" his epic may act as a conduit of grace for readers. PL is thus more than an English literary epic, for it introduces readers into the reality of grace and evil that touches all humanity.

Even early in life John Milton understands himself as having a sacred calling that he reveals in his youthful poetry. A reader recognizes a developing authorial self that occurs in this early poetry as Milton offers his audience autobiographical glimpses into a ripening self-image of a poet and establishing his relationship to the Incarnate Word. He seems conscious of time, for he dates everything. As early as age twenty-one (December,

1629), he writes a Christmas birthday ode for the Infant that he sends to his friend Charles Diodati along with notes about his method of composition—composed very early on Christmas morning. “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” sometimes referred to as the Nativity Ode written in the classical pattern of Pindar and Horace, Milton introduces the reader to a poet who runs to present his “humble ode” first before the Magi can present their gifts to the new born king. Readers familiar with PL recognize foreshadowing in the Nativity Ode not only because his Heav’nly Muse has already begun to inspire the young poet, but also because the sun as the symbol of light cannot equal the Son of the ode. Significantly, in the reference to the “old Dragon,” Satan makes an appearance “wroth to see his Kingdom fail” (171), while apocalyptic insight occurs in stanzas 15 and 16, the theological center of the ode. Milton sends his ode along with a Latin verse-letter known as Elegy VI to his friend Charles Diodati who will judge of “these simple strains that have been meditated on my native pipes.”<sup>4</sup> In Elegy VI Milton defines himself. The carefree life does not characterize the epic poet he aspires to become. Rather, he must “live sparingly,” and “innocent of crime and chaste, his conduct irreproachable and his hands stainless” so that like Tiresias and Homer, he may become “sacred to the gods,” and be” their priest.” Therein, he also writes about a prophet-priest “glorious with sacred vestments and lustral waters” who is prepared to go “into the presence of the angry deities.”<sup>5</sup> Milton confirms his resolution formed in Elegy VI, for he later observes in an Apology for Smectymnuus (1642) that

I was confirmed in this opinion that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things—not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that is praiseworthy.<sup>6</sup>

Milton's statement echoes aspirations of Elegy VI written in 1629. By spring 1642 a poetic vocation has taken root in Milton that he does not mind making public. Roy Flannagan remarks that "Paradise Lost will be the product of such an exemplary personal life, the life of the serious scholar poet."<sup>7</sup> Thus, Milton's self-definition as one called to speak to others of divine matters resonates early in his life. Yet, Milton feels unprepared for the great task he envisions in Elegy VI even if he preserves his good name, develops an upright character, and lives fugally. He broods about his vocation in his poetry long before he makes a decision about its expression. In Sonnet VII (1632?), written after graduation from Christ's College at age twenty-three, he reveals some anxiety that time has passed him by: "my late spring no bud or blossom show'th" (4) even as he remains well aware that to fulfill "the will of Heav'n" (12) he needs "grace" (13) for the poetic work required by the "great task-Masters eye" (14).<sup>8</sup> Both in 1632 in Sonnet VII and later in 1652 in Sonnet XIX, he bemoans his frustrated poetic talent: "Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent / To serve therewith my Maker, and present / My true account . . ." (4-6).<sup>9</sup> Milton takes to heart the Parable of the Talents of Matthew 25:14-30, the asceticism demanded of the priestly poet, and the necessity that the poet be a good person while responding to a divine call. Much later, in his use of "Siloa's Brook" (1.11) in the Proem to Book I of PL, Milton, according to Michael Lieb, actually describes the role of poet "from the personal (prophet) to the worldly (king) to the divine (priest). In these three respects, the poet is inspired to carry out God's divine plan."<sup>10</sup> Milton's words reveal the progress of his vocational self-understanding.

In a "Letter to a Friend" written in 1633 or 1637 (scholars debate the date),<sup>11</sup> Milton mentions his "obscure" and "unserviceable life to mankind" and gives a defense

of his “tardie moving.” Recalling the parable of the vineyard, the unprofitable servant, and the master’s coming to give each one his due, Milton admits he fears to hide talents, feels the weight of “the great commandment,” and stands off with a “sacred reverence” that by “being late” in producing work he is “more fit” not to bury his talent.<sup>12</sup>

Recognizing his talent is only one aspect of vocation; he has to discover the most suitable state of life in which to express it.

Raised by his parents in the Church of England, Milton studies at Christ’s College, Cambridge where he earns his bachelor’s degree in 1629 and a master of arts in 1632 with an intention of service within the priesthood of the English Church, even signing the Subscription Books in 1629 and yet again in 1632. However, sometime after graduation and while in private study at his family home in Hammersmith (1832) and later at Horton (1835), he manifests mental conflict with the religious and political conservatism of Archbishop Laud. Consequently, sometime between 1632 and 1637 Milton re-examines his vocation, integrates his ecclesiastical training and his poetic talent, and in a new self-definition conceives himself as the priest-poet he had described in Elegy VI. Scripture expresses the notion of priesthood another way that Milton knew and applied to himself: “Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (I Peter 2: 4-5). In other words, priesthood becomes a component in one’s everyday life, a factor Milton integrates into his self-definition. A concurrent thought, a few verses later in the Epistle of Peter had to resonate with Milton who experiences himself as one called to minister to the people of England: “But you are a

chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, / but now you are God's people; / once you had not received mercy, / but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2: 9-10).

In Ad Patrem, dated variously from 1630 to as late as 1640, Milton attempts a justification of his poetic talent to his father. Merritt Hughes reminds us that "in Milton's boyhood everything seems to have conspired to make him a linguist and a poet, but his father was the archconspirator,"<sup>13</sup> a suspicion Milton as an adult may harbor, but wise enough not to mention. Moreover, he speaks deferentially about the man who nurtures his talents before the boy recognizes them. Certainly, Milton, in the poem dedicated to his father acknowledges gratitude for inherited talents, the munificence his father has shown in his education, and the leisure provided for study. Realistically and almost resignedly but with self-understanding, Milton admits "it is my lot to have been born a poet" (61). Then, in economic terms, Milton gives an accounting, a reckoning, of the "means" and "wealth" (12-13) of his talents recognizing that his father with his own talent in music shares in his son's gifts. In fact, John Milton, Sr., a scrivener by profession, writes and supervises legal documents while his son will write literary documents. By referencing the present in the opening lines of Ad Patrem and the future thirty lines later, Milton calls attention to what he experiences currently to what he knows he and his father will become in the future: "Now I wish that the Pierian fountains would send their waters flooding through my breast and make my lips the channel for the whole stream that pours from the twin peaks, so that my Muse—her trivial songs forgotten—might rise on bold wings to do honor to my reverend father" (1-5). Milton remarks

further into his defense that when he and his father “return to our native Olympus and the everlasting ages of immutable eternity are established we shall walk, crowned with gold, through the temples of the skies and with the harp’s soft accompaniment we shall sing sweet songs to which the stars shall echo and the vault of heaven from pole to pole” (30-34). He desires his father to know that his talent has not just genetic origins but as a gift from Olympus calls him to ever greater achievement. Milton wants approval from his father, “whatever wealth I possess I have reckoned up on this piece of paper” (13), but he also needs financial support to continue developing as a poet. In a sense, this poem justifying the son as poet to his father carries Milton farther along in his self-definition and self-realization, for as he defines himself to his father, he clarifies his purpose. Unfortunately, scholars cannot accurately place Ad Patrem in Milton’s chronology, a fact that would help date his decision process.

When his period of scholarly and personal formation ends with a decision taken not to pursue the clerical state, Milton subsequently feels compelled to address abuses within the Church of England that result in five antiprelatical prose tracts, the fourth of which he titled The Reason of Church-Government Urg’d against Prelaty (RCG), the longest and most biographically significant for scholars and for readers whom he draws into his decision making process such as he does again in PL with the decisions of Adam and Eve. RCG, written in 1642, reveals something of Milton’s crisis of vocation.<sup>14</sup> He writes about the respect that one needs to have toward self, about “the love of God, as a fire sent from heaven to be ever kept alive upon the altar of our hearts”—the “first principle of all godly and virtuous action,” and about the one who “holds himself in reverence and due esteem both for the dignity of God’s image upon him and for the price



of his redemption.”<sup>15</sup> In addition, a person who holds himself in esteem “accounts himself a fit person to do the noblest and godliest deeds”<sup>16</sup> and would not allow “something unholy from within his own heart” to “dishonor and profane in himself that Priestly unction.”<sup>17</sup> Within RCG Milton reveals that he finds himself first called to the clerical state in the Church of England by his parents, friends, and his “own resolution,” but recognizing conflicts within himself and within his country, he chooses instead the power of poetry rather than the power of the pulpit. He realizes that “he who took orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath,” wherein his conscience would rebel, he could perjure himself, or “split his faith.”<sup>18</sup> Preferring “a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking” that the office of a clerical minister requires in troubled times, and “Church-outed,” as he claims by the repressive measures of the hierarchy during the reign of Charles I (1625-49), Milton recognizes in light of his original vocation, that he still possesses by the “right” of his original vocation, the duty “to meddle in these matters, as before, the necessity and constraint appeared.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, the clerical vocation per se may have passed, but Milton still recognizes a responsibility to the Giver of his talents and to the receiver of the poet’s words to speak and write of abuses of things Divine, to be faithful to his poetic talent and sacred calling, albeit changed by the nature of the dark historical period in which he lives. In describing his literary aim as “teaching over the whole book of sanctity and vertu through all the instances of example,” Milton argues for religion and virtue as poetic themes in literature.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, in RCG he sees himself among the great poets, writers, and thinkers of all time even formulating a few critical principles that I mention below. Milton’s reservations about the clerical state that he

reveals in RCG in 1642 occur during the turbulent political reign of Charles I and the contentious Episcopal period of Archbishop Laud sometime between 1632 and 1637.

John Shawcross teaches that Milton's intention to make poetry his vocation rather than the clerical state occurs before his Italian trip, probably in early autumn 1637 which makes autumn of "1637 the turning point in Milton's life."<sup>21</sup> Shawcross observes that in that year Archbishop William Laud (1573-1645) "had set nearly the entire nation against the King, and no longer was there a moderate group between the Puritans and the Laudians."<sup>22</sup> Anointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633 and known for his high-church insistence on outward religious ceremonies, Laud by 1637 had involved himself first in English politics, as chief minister to Charles I, and second in economics in his opposition to enclosure. However, in clerical matters Laud promotes clergymen to government offices, orders no controversial sermons preached such as those that encouraged Puritan ideas, increases tithes, works to suppress Puritanism, and visits most of the English parishes overseeing the changes he had ordered in the liturgy, thereby increasing animosity toward him and his policies. Meanwhile, William Prynne (1600-1669), a lawyer, Reverend Henry Burton (1578-1648), and Dr. John Bastwick (1539-1654) had been fined, mutilated, and imprisoned for life. Christopher Hill notes that "the resentment which the Star Chamber sentences on Prynne, Burton, and Bastwick aroused sprang not so much from their savagery as because this savagery was employed against gentlemen, members of the three learned professions."<sup>23</sup> With the occurrence of these external events, one understands Milton's questioning of vocation. Consequently, personal, political, and ecclesiastical events shape Milton's decision to become a poet rather than a cleric.

John Spencer Hill and John Shawcross differ as to the date of Milton's decision to forgo ordination in the Anglican Church. Hill writes: "The decision to become a poet, like that to become a minister of the Word was taken early; and the vocational streams issuing from these twin resolves run parallel and are of equal strength until at least 1637 when he composed Lycidas."<sup>24</sup> That pastoral elegy, a poetic form developed by Theocritus and used by Chaucer, Spenser, and Virgil to inaugurate their literary careers, but called by Milton a "monody" or a soliloquy, commemorates the life and death (August 10, 1637) of a promising fellow scholar and poet at Christ's College, Edward King. The elegy gives a reader the sense that his death shocked Milton into more self-reflection and action since, as he reveals in RCG, he has not completed his preparation for poetic achievement. In addition, Lycidas reveals a Milton who, according to Hill, "is revolted by the rampant abuse and self-interest at all levels in the church in which he proposes to serve."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, Hill places the actual time of decision sometime after Milton's Italian journey beginning with the 1640 repressive measures found in the Canons of Archbishop Laud, and ending the decision process in 1642 with Milton's revelatory remarks in RCG—"the only place in his writings where Milton states directly his reasons for rejecting a clerical vocation."<sup>26</sup>

Shawcross, however, as mentioned above, takes autumn 1637 as the "turning point in Milton's career" with his actions during 1637-1641—the revision of Comus, the plans for a dramatic work in the Trinity Manuscript, the notes in the Commonplace Book, the journey itself, and his remarks in RCG—as "implied" indicators that prior to the trip John Milton knew in his mind what he would do.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, in Book II of RCG Milton writes that he recognized on his trip to Italy "an inward prompting which now

grew daily upon me, that by labour and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life) joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let die.”<sup>28</sup> In RCG Milton first describes that “inward prompting” about a forthcoming piece of literature (a hint of PL) he intuits he will write that future ages would preserve, what Ralph Haug in his notes to RCG calls “divine inspiration.”<sup>29</sup> Certainly then, Milton’s recognition of an “inward prompting,” an acknowledgment of his talents, and a desire to leave posterity a poetic document that would inculcate virtue, teach manners, and honor God indicate the depth and breadth of his self-scrutiny regarding his vocation on his Italian trip.<sup>30</sup>

To sum up then, scholars have recognized that Milton’s decision to forgo ordination and the pulpit for a literary vocation does not lessen responsibility for his talent or diminish his obedience to the will of God but directs him to use his talents in responsible service to “his great purpose,” as John Shawcross calls it.<sup>31</sup> In his essay, “Milton’s Decision to become a Poet,” Shawcross draws attention to the “legend” William R. Parker develops in his Milton’s Contemporary Reputation that “‘Milton’s life was preternaturally consistent: that he knew early what he intended to do, set about it simply and directly, never swerved from his determined course, and died with every item on his mental list neatly ticked off as completed.’”<sup>32</sup> In fact, his original calling to the priesthood, although rejected, continues consciously and subconsciously to affect his decision for a literary career in the sense that Milton sees it as an opportunity to use his talents in service to a wider Church. Merritt Hughes, following the “legend,” seems to think so. He writes that “Long before he took his degree, however, he must have resolved, at least subconsciously, to live the life of a man of letters.”<sup>33</sup> Shawcross, in

setting the record straight, observes that Milton's desire for fame, to be a great poet, finds "explicit" expression in a letter to his friend Charles Diodati on 23 November 1637, in Lycidas, and in RCG. Shawcross observes: "Yet his calling as a poet is qualified by certain considerations: God must be glorified by the honor and instruction of his country."<sup>34</sup> In other words, for Shawcross, Milton has some idea in 1637 that his talents lie in literature; in its service, he serves God, England, and mankind.

In RCG Milton admits he intends "teaching" both sanctity and virtue by poetry "through all the instances of example with such delight to those especially of soft and delicious temper" whom Puritan sermons and pamphlets cannot reach.<sup>35</sup> He desires to interpret and to relate "the best and sagest things" to his countrymen in the mother dialect. Indeed, "what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy and those Hebrews of old, did for their county, I in my proportion with this over and above of being a Christian, might do for mine; not caring to be once named abroad, though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these British islands as my world."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Milton holds that poetic gifts "wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God." He writes that even if they are "rarely bestow'd," they possess "power beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seed of virtue," both private and public and often "allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty Hymns the throne and equipage of God's Almightiness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church."<sup>37</sup> Thus, in RCG Milton separates himself from the false "business" of religion and defines himself in terms of a Gospel call to holiness.

Additionally, Ralph Haug finds that Milton in his long preface to Book II of RCG offers twelve critical poetic principles or ideals that Milton develops and categorizes in preparation for the poetic work of his right hand, but which he often finds useful in the prose of the left. Among these principles Milton recognizes “decorum” and the “hard work” required of a poet so that poetry in the vernacular exalts both God and country but at the same time teaches, delights, and moves the reader as a “pleasant medicine.” Milton believes “poetry is the inspired gift of God, but inspiration must be supported by good character and learning” so that it may effect the inculcation of virtue as occurs in (epic), calming the passions (tragedy), celebrating “the greatness of God and his saints” (hymns), and preventing “national backsliding.”<sup>38</sup> Thus as early as 1642, Milton recognizing the power a poet possesses to affect the temper of the times and to touch the human spirit, views himself among the writers of his time, defines his literary goals and principles, and recognizes a responsible relationship with his readers.

Milton carries the burden of writing something “laudable” for a good portion of his life before he actually composes PL, a reason perhaps why so much autobiography creeps into his prose as he articulates for himself and others a self-definition as an English poet. Milton’s argues that “whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime” or in “virtue amiable or grave” may serve as topics for poetry.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Milton foregoes until later the writing of his great poem mentioned in RCG, teaching salvation history through epic, to call attention, as a prophet must do in troubled times, to clerical abuses in the English Church—a service for people and country. Later, as Secretary of State for the Commonwealth (1649-1655) under the Protectorate (1653-1658) of Oliver Cromwell

(1599-1658), his convictions about royal and clerical exploitation crystallize and prepare Milton for his last three major works. Austin Woolrych observes that

Cromwell's need and desire to win over the men of substance of the old political nation inevitably involved some conservative reaction, and every symptom of it alienated Milton. He never condemned Cromwell by name, but he almost certainly referred to the whole of the Protectorate as 'a short but scandalous night of interruption' (in the Preface to Hire) and his repudiation of all its works is implicit in his tracts of 1659-60.<sup>40</sup>

As a result of service to the Protectorate, Milton suffers criticism, experiences depression, and views the Restoration as a failure of the English nation to assume its proper prophetic role in European Protestantism. Time, events, and circumstance have readied Milton to begin his great epic.

Yet, despite humiliation and a sense of failure during these bitter years, Milton conceives and executes the greatest literary epic in which he fulfills the ideals enumerated in RCG. In deciding upon the epic as his form for the Fall of man rather than a tragedy for stage, Adam Unparadiz'd,<sup>41</sup> Milton associates himself with the long line of prophetic poets in literature and scripture before him. Moreover, he selects the most appropriate poetic form, the epic, to fulfill his sacred calling, for poetry is the best medium for the prophet according to Harold Bloom.<sup>42</sup> One has only to recall the works and words of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Micah, Homer, and Tiresias.

Karl Rahner, in "Priest and Poet," an essay written three centuries after Milton, captures the nature of that self-identification which a young Milton conceives for himself but which matures in him through personal suffering and political service. Rahner, however, takes the notion of a priest-poet to its ultimate fulfillment:

Among the highest possibilities belongs the union of priest and poet in one man. Can these two vocations become one and the same? In this life of mere starts and vain endeavors we can scarcely dare to await the perfectly

successful union of priest and poet. Certainly someone could be a priest and on top of this, also a poet. However, this is very far from saying that he is the one in the other and that both are in him identical. The fulfillment of the future, however, toward which we wend our pilgrims' way, beams forth the assurance that the Perfect Priest and the Perfect Poet were one.<sup>43</sup>

Rahner holds that "the poet calls to the priest. The great words which the poet speaks are words of longing. They say something expressive, visible, pregnant."<sup>44</sup> Rahner captures something of what Milton articulates in PL, especially as the narrator records the conversations of Adam and Eve:

The poet is driven on by transcendence of the spirit. He is already secretly—unknown to himself—overwhelmed by the longing which the holy spirit of grace has placed in the hearts of men.

Thus he speaks words of longing even when he talks of flowers and the love of two human hearts. His words of longing stretch themselves out toward an unsurpassable perfection, toward perfect love, toward the final glorification of all reality. His word thus calls to another word: to the word which gives answer to his own . . . to the word of God.<sup>45</sup>

Two theologians, one in the Reformed tradition of the seventeenth century and the other in the modern Roman Catholic tradition, bridge the span of time with their understanding of the power of poetry and recognize the importance of poetry to speak words of life for the human spirit.

### **Scholars Recognition of Milton's Sacred Calling**

Miltonists agree that Milton's self-awareness of his sacred poetic calling as a poet-prophet or as poet-priest has value in understanding his works. Scholars over the centuries have remarked about Milton's prophetic voice. For example, the poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827) between the years 1804-11 produces Milton, an illuminated epic. Blake writes his text by drawing on episodes in PL which he etches into relief with fifty plates, "the designs in two varieties of white-line etching that he called 'Woodcut [a



relief] on Copper' and 'Woodcut on Pewter," that focus on Milton as poet-prophet.<sup>46</sup>

Joseph Wittreich notes that William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), Unitarian clergyman active in the Unitarian controversy and a precursor of American Transcendentalism, observed "that Milton assumes the posture of John of Patmos as he writes De Doctrina Christiana addressing himself to 'All the Churches of Christ.'" Additionally, Wittreich reminds readers that "the prophetic stance, it should be emphasized, is not unique to Milton's poetry but is equally important and prominent in his prose tracts."<sup>47</sup> As a sign of a sacred calling a prophet speaks words of truth as well as speaks for God. Both Milton and the scholars who know him best agree that Milton responds to an inner calling—one that a reader recognizes as sacred.

In 1937, Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson (1866-1960) writes about Milton and Wordsworth as poets and prophets. He reflects on Milton's prophetic vocation in light of the great prophets of Israel asking "how far is Milton to be reckoned a prophetic poet in the sense of Biblical prophecy?"<sup>48</sup> Grierson holds that "all great ethical and spiritual truths come from God and that by way of great individuals" such as the prophets of Scripture.<sup>49</sup> Prophets do not reflect the signs of the times but speak against the articulated thought of the day. In a word, prophets are counter-culture. The great prophets have "no articulated scheme of philosophy, no stereotyped theology . . . no proofs for the existence of God."<sup>50</sup> Although a person may be prophetic about "things spiritual and ethical," drawing inspiration from the Divine, Grierson does not hold that prophecy "is by an entirely irrational process" because "no appeal to reason would carry conviction to the prophet or be communicable to his hearers."<sup>51</sup> Thus both reason and intuition have a place in prophecy. "If ever an English poet . . . deemed himself a prophet, something

even more because more expressly inspired than such a philosophical poet as he judged Spenser to be, it was Milton.”<sup>52</sup> The poet who teaches requires inspiration—“the inspired gift of God.”<sup>53</sup> Grierson finds prophetic hints in Milton’s mental and emotional development “from the time that, moved by the events of the years following his return from Italy, and rapt in a vision of a regenerate England, he definitely conceived of himself as one on whom also a burden was laid, and looked forward, as his share in the sacred task to the composition of a great poem that should be ‘doctrinal to a nation.’”<sup>54</sup> For Grierson, it is the experiences that Milton endures that “made his conception of the poetry he wished to write more prophetic in tone than Spenser’s, that made the idea of inspiration more and more central to his conception of poetry, and indeed ultimately to his own life.”<sup>55</sup> Not surprisingly, Milton undergoes disillusionment when the Revolution fails to return England to apostolic integrity. The failure of the Civil War marks the occasion that causes his “abandonment of the thought of an historical poem . . . what took its place was an indictment of human weakness, and that not as the expression of an intuitive, passionate conviction but as the fruit of experience and the quite conscious reflection on that experience.”<sup>56</sup> Consequently, Grierson holds that Milton’s prophetic power reaches its fulfillment not in PL but in the Defensio Secunda (1654), The Second Defense for the English People, with its praise of Cromwell and leaders of Parliament.<sup>57</sup> For Grierson, PL’s strength lies in its didactic power in teaching “the ways of God to men” and its greatness in its artistic merit, “the creation of great scenes and characters and incidents, that and the style and verse.”<sup>58</sup> In other words, PL is “didactic, not prophetic.”<sup>59</sup> Grierson sees PL as an epic of reason rather than as a poem of prophetic intuition. Even though the poet and prophets use “symbols” and “images,” they are

thinkers as well who respond to problems with their reason. Therefore, Milton “is not a prophet in the sense in which prophetic inspiration is claimed for at least the greatest of the Hebrew prophets,” but he receives his inspiration “from the spirit that had been moving over the waters of European religious thought for more than a century,” historically called Protestantism and its English form, Puritanism.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Grierson sees intuition not as an “irrational process” but as a “process of reason” which also includes a prophet’s feelings which become “premisses from which the great prophet reasons,” while intuition is “reason working on more subtle and complex data than the thinker can hope to define clearly.”<sup>61</sup> Consequently, Grierson argues that Milton’s rationality is more in control in PL than his intuition.

Responding to Professor Grierson’s position, E. M. W. Tillyard (1889-1962) in 1939 in “Milton and Prophetic Poetry” agrees that an “apocalyptic fervour that animates Milton’s early pamphlets is lacking in Paradise Lost,” but he also finds “certain parallel activities in the poem, certain ways of feeling with which Milton was burdened and of which he had to deliver himself.” Tillyard recognizes “prophetic outbursts in the early poems” that express a “rapture” and a “message” that indicate a “state of mind of whose existence that artistry is both the pledge and the expression.”<sup>62</sup> Yet, he declares “I think therefore that great as was Milton’s exultation in 1641 at the prospect of a reformed England, Professor Grierson is wrong in making the Revolution so sudden and dominating an eminence in the geography of Milton’s poetic career.”<sup>63</sup> Tillyard disagrees with Grierson that the failure of the Revolution shuts down Milton’s prophetic powers even though it is true that Milton has become disillusioned with politicians, clergy, and the congregations they manipulate. Therefore, according to Tillyard, one

cannot view PL merely as creative literary artistry as Grierson does, for “he allows no meaning Milton may be conveying extrinsically to the story or to the theological framework.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, Grierson misses the prophetic element in PL because he holds the epic to be the result of reason rather than all of Milton’s powers.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century four additional scholars have argued for and critiqued Milton’s self-understanding of a sacred vocation. William Kerrigan (1974), Joseph Wittreich (1979), and John Spencer Hill (1979) focus on various aspects/nuances of Milton’s prophetic vocation by developing the importance of his self-understanding of a public prophetic mission. Michael Lieb (1981) concentrates on Milton as a prophetic-priestly author in the biblical tradition. Lieb takes the notion of poet, priest, and prophet developed by Hill, Wittreich, and Kerrigan to a literary conclusion by entitling his reading of PL a Poetics of the Holy.

One who has a job description as these authors describe certainly must possess a divine calling. However, just because Milton believes he has a sacred calling does not in itself prove he possesses such a mission. One could contend that as Milton is highly conscious of his authorial self, he could have deluded himself about a sacred calling. Yet, one may argue to the contrary conclusion by reasoning from the effects, especially Milton’s total oeuvre from the self-presentation in his Nativity Ode to his last three works, to the cause of his remarkable confidence—the sacred calling, divine inspiration, and the grace of extraordinary talents. Recognizing the high quality of his literary output, Milton critics acknowledge the truth of what Milton articulates in prose and early poetry: Milton does indeed create in his work from a sense of sacred mission.

Kerrigan in The Prophetic Milton (1974) develops an understanding of prophecy and Milton as a prophetic poet by relating prophecy to inspiration and the teaching power of poetry, especially as used by prophets. The term “inspiration” comes from the Latin “inspiro,” meaning to breathe upon, but Cassell’s Latin dictionary recognizes a transferred, altered, or metaphorical sense that means to “breathe into” or “inspire.”<sup>65</sup> A synonym for inspiration, “afflatus” comes from Cicero’s On Divination (1.18.37) that Kerrigan combines with divine in his recognition that Milton has a place among prophets: “Divine afflatus has always authorized special men to undertake special labors. Prophecy . . . is most noticeable as a tone of voice, an attitude toward men derived from a necessarily hidden attitude toward God; no one experiences prophecy except the prophet.”<sup>66</sup> Kerrigan undertakes to explain the unique prophetic experience that Milton the Protestant possesses: “to extend and perfect the Word through his prophetic office”<sup>67</sup> in which he offers PL “as another Testament.”<sup>68</sup> God through inspiration directs and influences writers of Scripture, yet the authors remain real authors who use their own faculties of intellect and will in the selection of genre, the expression of ideas, and the choice of vocabulary. Thus, Milton even as he prays for and receives divine inspiration still has the difficult work of composition before him.

Kerrigan observes that although Milton “was profoundly indebted to a long theological tradition of defining and categorizing the kinds of prophetic inspiration in the Bible,” Milton scholars have neglected prophetic inspiration in their critical studies that he searches to fathom.<sup>69</sup> Kerrigan affirms that “Milton believed himself a prophet. The traditional idea became inseparable from the self who had received the tradition. He spoke as a prophet, rarely of the prophet, and this belief in intimate impulse and divine

favor sustained him through most of his life.”<sup>70</sup> However, early in The Prophetic Milton, Kerrigan notes that a scholar such as William Riley Parker in his Milton: A Biography makes “little mention of the special communion between Milton and God.”<sup>71</sup> Kerrigan sees this omission as a means of creating a “safe” Milton rather than a “dangerous” one<sup>72</sup> among many Milton scholars who have invested the whole issue of inspired creation with an aura of forbidden knowledge,” so that an inspired Milton “has suffered from a conspiracy of tactful disinterest”<sup>73</sup> lest a prophetic or inspired Milton antagonize an already hostile group of anti-Miltonists. To view Milton within “traditional scholarship” or “Christian humanism” or “the techniques of the New Criticism” Kerrigan finds too cautious and creates a “Milton almost anonymous, almost a culture unto himself.”<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Kerrigan notes that “imprecise vocabulary about Milton such as “poet-prophet,” nothing more than “critical jargon,” occurs because critics desire “to neutralize his constant identification with the prophets of God.”<sup>75</sup> Kerrigan speculates that “perhaps divine guidance is better left unexamined in so great an artist.”<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, Kerrigan holds that “teaching was, for Milton, the work of the inspired disseminating their inspiration. Because the activity of the divine teacher embodied and continued the prophetic office of Christ, any poet who wished to teach ‘the whole book of sanctity and vertu’ would naturally aspire to become a prophetic poet.”<sup>77</sup> Yet, Milton, in the process of becoming through poetry an Abdiel, a servant of God, suffers handicap, disillusionment, and defeat. At the same time, Milton discovers an inner light and relationship to classical prophets such as Tiresias and to the biblical prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah who hold a central position within the Old Testament. With that light and

insight, Milton proceeds with PL even though his literary milieu, but not his political or religious environment, prefers reason as the primary light.

Respect for inspiration did not find a place in Renaissance and Jacobean literature. A long standing debate between the neo-Platonists and the Aristotelians had changed the temper of the time. Poets would evoke the prophets or use terms such as “vates,” Latin for prophet,<sup>78</sup> or furor poeticus, a Latin phrase for inspiration as a poetic or prophetic frenzy used by Cicero quoting Democritus,<sup>79</sup> but no one would seriously invoke divine aid for what they could by nature produce.<sup>80</sup> One observes in the seventeenth century the beginning of a creeping secularism into art and public independence in the poet as he resists public acknowledgement of divine help in favor of the poet’s initiative in the development of his talents and strengths though privately he might admit differently. Actually, the problem with inspired prophecy occurs as soon as patristic writers attempt to distance Biblical prophecy from classical prophecy, but the Fathers never define the difference between the two types of prophecy; later generations find that they have that task. In writing to Can Grande della Scala, Dante urges Christian poets to pray for divine inspiration because they need “something beyond the ordinary range of human powers, something almost in the nature of a divine gift” and mentions his own visionary experience saying that it could not have occurred “without the special favors of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>81</sup> However, Dante invokes Apollo but claims aid from the Holy Spirit as well. Now, Renaissance scholars must distinguish between Apollo and the Holy Spirit, between the classical and the Christian vates. The Fathers had argued about “two kinds of prophets,” but the Renaissance scholars such as Boccaccio and Marsilio Ficino had to argue about “two kinds of poets.”<sup>82</sup> Platonists supported the furor poeticus

that linked the classical and Biblical prophet, whereas the Aristotelians favored art over the power of God. Fortunately, Milton moves above the controversy calling upon both Heav'nly Muse and the Holy Spirit. Roy Flannagan, agreeing with and citing Kerrigan, observes that Milton "believed in the inspiration and divine ecstasy, the Neoplatonic 'furor' and the apocalyptic vision of the inspired Christian poet."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, Milton does call upon his muse to inspire him with the same Spirit that inspired the "Shepherd," Moses.

William Kerrigan urges a reader to understand Milton within the context of Civil War and religious controversy where English Protestantism divides itself. He teaches readers to recognize in what ways English literary culture prior to the Puritan Revolution treats the notion of prophetic inspiration. "On the subject of poetic inspiration, at least, the English critics were unmindful, vague, and often unimpressive. For rhetorical strategy, for purposes of persuasion, the allusions to vates and furor poetics were regularly evoked and just as regularly forgotten."<sup>84</sup> In the Patristic period, the Fathers stressed differences between classical and Christian poetry, between the furor poeticus of the pre-Christian poets and the tranquility, reason, and order found in prophets, while in Renaissance England "the question of divine inspiration was subordinate to the larger issue of divine literature itself. As the Fathers slighted the poet to clarify the prophet, so English critics slighted the prophet to clarify the poet."<sup>85</sup> However, Milton grounded in his sense of sacred calling, speaks with authority, re-writes the word of God, and finds kinship with Moses to whom "the Lord used to speak face to face, as one speaks to a friend (Ex. 33:11), who asks God to "Show me your glory" (Ex. 33:17), but God puts Moses in "a cleft in the rock" to let him see only His glory as He passes by: "I will cover



you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen” (Ex. 33:22). Similarly, by his prayers Milton invokes Divine aid; with blinded eyes covered, God permits the eyes of Milton’s spirit and mind to undergo something of the Moses experience—Milton may peer into the Light of Divine Reality so that he “may assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men” (1. 25-26).

Joseph Wittreich challenges Kerrigan’s claim to have discovered the prophetic Milton insisting that “a new history may not uncover what was never perceived before, but is apt to place accents where they had never been positioned before.”<sup>86</sup> In other words, although scholars recognized a prophetic element in Milton, Kerrigan’s work opened the concepts of prophecy and inspiration in Milton to critical scrutiny by placing emphasis on new aspects of Milton’s debt to the prophetic books of Scripture. Wittreich, writing Visionary Poetics at the time of Kerrigan’s publication, could “refocus” his own work in light of Kerrigan’s text. Wittreich finds that Kerrigan has developed “new contexts for criticism” by his work, but “he has not in any real sense discovered, though he does further substantiate and thereby accentuate, Milton’s indebtedness to the Bible, especially its prophetic books.” Using Kerrigan’s own description of Prophetic Milton as a “history of prophets rather than of prophecy,” Wittreich differentiates his purpose in Visionary Poetics as a “history of prophecy seizing upon the historical moment when prophecy established itself as a genre.”<sup>87</sup> However, Wittreich’s text does more, for it “peers beyond that moment, looking at another’s moment in history when prophecy gripped the poet’s imagination and became the informing influence on his art.” Thus,

Wittreich, in defining his text, at the same time places Kerrigan's The Prophetic Milton within a valuable critical moment.

Wittreich early in Visionary Poetics (1979) investigates the genre of prophecy and Milton's place both within the genre and among the prophets of both the Old and the New Testaments who influence Milton. Within the Renaissance concept of epic, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel serve as prophetic models, but within the apocalyptic genre the Book of Revelation, because it embodies a revelation of Jesus Christ to John of Patmos, achieves perfection.<sup>88</sup> Renaissance authors held that prophecy as found in The Book of Revelations constituted the "most perfect example"<sup>89</sup> of prophecy as well as "a fully formed genre" recognized "by the capaciousness of its form, by its thematic distinctive structure and ideological fix" so that it excelled "all other poetry in both style and subject" becoming "the noblest of the kinds—a judgment shared by Milton himself."<sup>90</sup> Wittreich holds that Milton "turned to the prophetic books of the Bible, not just for subject matter and imagery but for artistic models as well"<sup>91</sup> and argues that prophecy accounts for both the "content" and "structure" of Milton's works.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, Wittreich observes that "Milton exemplified a tradition of art in which the poet and prophet were one."<sup>93</sup> Wittreich sees poet-prophet Milton creating the world of his epic in imitation of the Father creating his universe, a position similarly held by John Shawcross in his essay "The Rhetor as Creator" (1975) included in Milton's Epic Voice. Accordingly, scholars agree that Milton's art reflects and results from his identification with prophets who recognize they speak and act for the Divine. The prophetic identification arises from a relationship with the Divine or Holy, resulting in Milton's sacred calling that accounts for his ability, talent, and works, especially PL.

Wittreich delves into the nature of the consciousness of the poet and prophet citing the work of Roland Barth who states that poets and painters have different “kinds of consciousness.” Wittreich, on the other hand, maintains that a prophet’s consciousness borders on the infinite. “Expanding consciousness, expanding it into the infinite—these objectives require a transcendental form, one capable of embracing all others . . . whose objective is transcendental vision.” As a “perfect literary microcosm, prophecy is a new creation revealing the secret of all creation, whereby order is brought out of chaos and unity wrested from division.” In epic poetry, the poet finds another level of consciousness and the poetry marks a shift in a culture’s level of consciousness, while in prophecy, a person reaches the highest level of consciousness. However, the prophecy alters “the very eye by which” a culture and its people conceive of themselves “by bringing individual men to the pinnacle of vision.” Wittreich declares that “prophecy thus locks arms with epic—but only so that it may advance beyond it, so that it may become in Wordsworth’s phrase, “Of quality and fabric more divine.”<sup>94</sup>

Of course, that occurs in PL where Milton’s level of consciousness so expands as he “pursues / Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme” (1.16-17). In showing readers a new reality about the Divine in his epic drama of the mind—he lifts the curtain on Hell, Heaven, Eden, and the Expulsion from the Garden—Milton also raises a reader’s level of consciousness. Wittreich as well offers readers a principle for prophetic discernment of a text: “prophecy is a literature of contexts depending upon the power of its allusions to return men to their source.”<sup>95</sup> Readers need to know the old prophets to understand or to unlock the new ones in order to move to another level of consciousness through reading. A reader’s struggle to understand the text, to understand the vision of the poet, reflects

the struggle “mirrored by the relationship that subsequently developed between the prophet and his audience, which now struggles to apprehend the vision that the prophet labored to articulate.”<sup>96</sup> However, whatever the reader invests in the epic pays dividends in his life.

In John Milton: Poet, Priest and Prophet (1979) John Spencer Hill addresses the development of Milton’s self-understanding of his calling, especially as he determines to be a poet rather than a cleric. Hill distinguishes between a general and a special vocation within the Calvinist doctrine of special election. The former is a vocation to faith and repentance required of all persons, while the latter, unique for each person “in its aspects of extra-personal service,” is the focus of his text. “Milton’s firmest conviction was that he had been called to serve as an instrument of the divine will.” During his formative years, Milton “concentrates on the improvement of his divinely implanted talents” and on self-definition as a poet-priest.<sup>97</sup> Hill notes that for Milton “a firm belief in divine imminence and providential direction underpins all of his thinking about vocation”<sup>98</sup> so that Milton holds “that his own secular careers were divine vocations. . . .”<sup>99</sup>

Commenting on the conclusion of the preface to RCG, Hill observes that a young Milton in “Elegy 6” and “Prolusion 7” understands the relationship of poetry and ministry: “The man who now aspires to be the poet-priest of his nation has not so much rejected a calling into the church—except as the bishops would define such a calling—as he has extended the notion of ministerial vocation to embrace a call to service as God’s spokesman and interpreter through poetry.”<sup>100</sup> Hill sees a link between Milton’s prophetic and poetic inspiration, for “both in the Nativity Ode and RCG he discusses his poetic vocation in prophetic terms, and it is therefore not surprising to find that in the prose works he

readily transfers his sense of election and inspiration as God's poet-priest to a call to serve him as His prophet of reformation."<sup>101</sup> During the 1640's while Milton writes his anti-episcopal tracts, he sees his personal vocation bound up with the religious and political issues of the day; during this period he comes to identify himself with biblical prophets. Hill recognizes an inspired priestly, prophetic vocation for Milton in prose and poetry. However, Hill realizes that Milton's vocation develops within the context of the Reformation, a thought essential for understanding the theologian and author of CD.

Hill clarifies Muse and Spirit whom Milton addresses in the first proem of PL. The reader discovers the Muse in "Sing Heav'nly Muse" (1.6) as the Muse that directed Moses in his writing of the Pentateuch; the reader also hears Milton ask the Spirit to "instruct" (1.19) him. While Milton, according to Hill, desires his Muse to "inspire" him and the Spirit to "teach" him, Milton addresses each "in different terms" and characterizes each "by different symbols: the Muse who is asked to 'sing' is defined largely in terms of speech and sound, whereas the didactic Spirit is described as imparting light and illumination."<sup>102</sup> Hill notes that the "tone" of the invocations differs: "The request to the Muse is confident and full of daring" while "the prayer to the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is a humble petition." Hill finds the difference between "the Muse who sings and the Spirit that justifies" offers a clue Milton's concept of inspiration:

The Muse is the divinely implanted poetic talent—that 'inspired gift of God rarely bestow'd' (RCG, I, p. 816)—which Milton has possessed from birth and which he has nurtured and improved over a long life of study and severe application. On the threshold of the great poem for which his whole life has been a preparation, he personifies his own creative energy and calls upon it to fulfill the end for which it was given, by pursuing 'Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme' . . . . But neither the original talent nor that talent as improved by human industry and study is wholly adequate for the great enterprise upon which he is embarking; and so Milton turns in the second section of the invocation to the Holy Spirit, humbly

beseeching that, through the operation of His Spirit, God will provide him with the subsequent or supporting grace needed to bring the work successfully to completion.<sup>103</sup>

As a consequence, within the context of a sacred and literary vocation, Milton understands his inspiration as two-fold—Muse and Holy Spirit—that reflects the character of the man in his personal relationship with the Sacred—confident with the Muse but humble before the Spirit.

Michael Lieb's The Poetics of the Holy (1981) adds support to the positions of the previous scholars, but he brings the poet Milton into the presence of the Divine through his priestly rather than prophetic function. Lieb concentrates on the sacerdotal as the “appropriate counterpart to “the vatic,” for “at its core, the biblical prophetic mode is very much a priestly affair.”<sup>104</sup> Lieb views PL as “a sacral document” by which he studies the nature of the holy in Milton's epic and as one that gives rise to a hierophantic outlook that complements and reinforces the “visionary poetics” of Kerrigan and Wittreich.<sup>105</sup> Milton writes holy works throughout his life because he recognizes his calling from God, develops his talents given to serve his Maker, and accepts a revised sacerdotal self-identification with the Divine as he explains in RCG. Milton responds to his sacred calling as a poetic priest-prophet with works such as (CD) (1650's), (PR) (1671) and (SA) (1671)—all partake of the holy or sacred.

Lieb places Milton in the tradition of the holy in the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian cultures as well as the holy studied by Octavio Paz, Rudolph Otto, and Mircea Eliade during the twentieth century. Lieb searches for the anthropological root of mankind's sense of the sacred in order to place PL within the field of the sacred. He agrees with Octavio Paz in Bow and Lyre that the sense of sacred predates other qualities

humanity may possess so that the “‘the sacred is the original feeling from which the sublime and poetic stem.’ As such, ‘the poetic experience, like the religious one, is a mortal leap’ by which ‘our being suddenly remembers its lost identity; and then that ‘other’ that we are appears, emerges.’”<sup>106</sup> In his Poetics Lieb sees Milton as “the poet of the other,” a phrase he takes from Paz. Indeed, Milton is also the poet of what Rudolph Otto develops in The Holy (1923, 1950) that he names the “Mysterium Tremendum,” a religious, mystical dread or awe of the Numinous or a realization of the Divine and what Otto names “the wholly other (ganz andere).”<sup>107</sup> Lieb understands The Holy as an “inquiry” that is “psychologically oriented.”<sup>108</sup> In addition to being Paz’s “the poet of the other” and Otto’s poet of “the wholly other,” Milton offers his readers a sense of holy that Mircea Eliade defines in The Sacred and the Profane (1959). Lieb characterizes Eliade’s work as concerned with the totality of the sacred whereby whenever the Divine reveals itself, often in hierophany that is a manifestation of the sacred or holy, the sacred finds itself in opposition to the profane.

To the list of scholars theoretically interested in the sacred in our lives—Paz, Otto, and Eliade—and the sacred calling of Milton—Kerrigan, Wittreich, Hill, and Lieb, I include Milton as the poet most practically involved in describing a relationship with the Divine as experienced by Adam, Eve, and their descendents—the readers of his poetry. More than any other poet, Milton gives his readers a dramatic rendering of the Creator and creature in dialogue and in alienation. Karl Rahner in The Foundations of Christian Faith calls the Divine “the holy Mystery,” a term that incorporates much of Paz, Otto, and Eliade but places Milton and his reader in the presence of the profoundly sacred, or on holy ground, or in the “cleft of the rock.” In light of the scholarship of

Kerrigan, Wittreich, Hill, and Lieb, the phenomenological approach of Rahner offers readers a transcendental experience in reading PL, a notion already expressed by Wittreich in defining poetic consciousness.

In summary, from the works of Milton the reader discovers the poet's self-realization of a sacred vocation, but from the research of Grierson, Tillyard, Kerrigan, Wittreich, Hill, and Lieb the reader finds a richness of context, background, and meaning surrounding that vocation that enriches the text. The debate in the early twentieth century between Professors Grierson and Tillyard defining when the prophetic Milton emerges in his poetry foregrounds the work of Kerrigan and Wittreich. Whereas Kerrigan calls attention to Milton's awareness of a prophetic calling in line with prophets like Moses and St. Paul, Wittreich grounds Milton in biblical genre of prophecy, in his election to the office of prophets, and in the efforts he endures to give life to his vision beginning in Book I of PL. Hill affirms that Milton as poet and essayist always believes in his divine vocation to serve and that God directs and sustains his vocation. Michael Lieb declares "the numinous in all its aspects figured prominently in Milton's works. The holy shaped his outlook and defined his vision as significantly as any other experience that found expression in his writings."<sup>109</sup> Kerrigan, Wittreich, Hill, and Lieb address the Divine in some form in Milton's life and art. Each scholar lets the reader glimpse an aspect of the phenomena of the sacred or holy working its way through the poet and his work. Just as in Scripture, the manifestation or epiphanies of God take many forms as the Divine uses writers, so in each text, scholars give readers a glimpse of the holy at work in Milton that urge him to write as one inspired called to complement Scripture with PL. The scholarship of Kerrigan, Wittreich, Hill, and Lieb opens Milton's work to additional



investigation of the Numinous on man and poet, support Milton's idea of a divine calling, and recognize the inspired nature of his work

Surely, Milton broods about the nature of his vocation while the circumstances of his life change. C. S. Lewis captures the anguish the choice of vocation occasions as something that appears "to men in the double character of a duty and a desire," while at the same time a vocation is "a thing that calls or beckons, that calls inexorably, yet," one strains his/her "ears to catch the voice, that insists on being sought, yet refuses to be found."<sup>110</sup> Milton finds his voice, considers himself a poet with a mission that clarifies itself within the context of his life experiences, and through political and personal turmoil moves forward with the work of his right hand. Consequently, I hold that PL by the very nature of its subject matter—the choice the reader makes between the economics of salvation or the economics of sin—in itself constitutes a prophetic mode for the poet who addresses such issues. In other words, similar to Old Testament prophets, Milton writes as one possessed of a great truth that worked upon his senses, reason, and spirit. As a prophetic, priestly poet Milton writes about and reflects the sacred, the holy, and the divine in PL because the Spirit inspires him; he lives and writes within a dimension of the sacred that enters his work. Indeed, Hill in writing about Milton's Divine Vocation continues his title with Poet, Priest and Prophet. As poet Milton identifies himself with God the Creator. John Shawcross tells readers "the poem we read is Milton's creation, a similitude of God's creation" where Milton "functions as a surrogate of God for man."<sup>111</sup> As a "surrogate," or priestly poet instructing his literary congregation, Milton, in the words Of Education (1644), undertakes the education of his readers through poetry "to repair the ruins of our first parents" so that readers, his "fit audience," may "know God

aright.”<sup>112</sup> As prophet, Milton, like John the Baptist cries out in the wilderness (Matt. 3:3) of Restoration England to prepare the way for God’s grace in the congregation of his readers.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> John T. Shawcross, "Paradise Lost and the Theme of Exodus," Milton Studies, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1970) 20.

<sup>2</sup> John Milton, Reason and Church Government (1642), in The Complete Prose Works of John Milton, ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-82) I.808. All citations from this publication hereafter are cited as YP.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Sidney, The Defense of Poesy, ed. Albert S. Cook (New York: Ginn, 1890) 9.

<sup>4</sup> John Milton "Elegy VI," Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Macmillan) 53, hereafter cited as CP in the endnotes. All passages from Paradise Lost come from John Milton Paradise Lost: A Poem in Twelve Books, A New Edition, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> CP 52.

<sup>6</sup> Milton, Apology for Smectymnuus, CP, 694.

<sup>7</sup> Roy Flannagan, The Riverside Milton (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) 195.

<sup>8</sup> Milton, "Sonnet VII," CP, 76-66.

<sup>9</sup> Milton, "Sonnet XIX," CP, 168.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Lieb, "Inspiration," A Milton Encyclopedia, ed. William B. Hunter, 9 vols. (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1978) Lieb previously writes: "Of equal importance is the way he characterizes the poet's priestly role by means of his allusions to Siloam. Through the waters of Siloam, the poet will be inspired to sing of re-creation and eternal life. While, on the one hand, the spiritual influence of God allows the blind poet to be prophetically inspired, the waters of Siloam purify the poet for his sacerdotal office. By associating himself with Siloa's Brook" (1.11 and 3.30), the poet deliberately causes his "sacred Song" (3.29) to suggest the character of one inspired by the "Oracle of God" (1.12), the place of divine revelation. Despite his blindness, his song concerns renewed sight and the healing of blindness through Christ" (1.11-12) 4:148b-149a.

<sup>11</sup> See John Shawcross, "Letter to an Unknown Friend." A Milton Encyclopedia, where he notes that 1633 is the "more traditional" date and 1637 a date "not generally accepted." Its place of inclusion in the Trinity Manuscript suggests ca. 1633 5:15a.

<sup>12</sup> See John Milton, "Letter to a Friend," in Flannagan 1050. Flannagan in a footnote writes that "the friend is most likely Thomas Young, and the letter was almost undoubtedly written in 1633" 1049. Flannagan refers the reader to William Riley Parker,

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“Some Problems on the Chronology of Milton’s Early Poems” Review of English Studies 11 (1935): 276-83.

<sup>13</sup> Merritt Y. Hughes ed., John Milton: Paradise Regained, The Minor Poems, and Samson Agonistes, Introduction (New York: Odyssey, 1937) xvi.

<sup>14</sup> John T. Shawcross, “Appendix,” Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton, eds. Michael Lieb and John Shawcross (Amherst: U of Mass P, 1974). Shawcross states that Milton’s two books of RCG bear the date and place (London in 1641), but he notes “Edward Griffin the Younger printed RCG for John Rothwell, and it appeared probably at the end of January 1642” 294.

<sup>15</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 841.

<sup>16</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 842.

<sup>17</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 844. Note 105 in the YP explains that Priestly unction is “a special spiritual influence making all believers priestly.”

<sup>18</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 823.

<sup>19</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 823.

<sup>20</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 817.

<sup>21</sup> John T. Shawcross, “Milton’s Decision to Become a Poet,” MLQ XXIV: 1 (1963): 23-24. See also John t. Shawcross, John Milton: the Self and the World (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1993) 95.

<sup>22</sup> Shawcross, “Decision” 26.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Hill, The Century of Revolution 1603-1714 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980) 38.

<sup>24</sup> John Spencer Hill, John Milton Poet, Priest and Prophet: A Study of Divine Vocation in Milton’s Poetry and Prose (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979) 28.

<sup>25</sup> Hill 41.

<sup>26</sup> Hill 41.

<sup>27</sup> Shawcross, John Milton: the Self and the World (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1993) 95 -96.

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<sup>28</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 810. See also the footnote on page 7 of Milton on Himself (New York: Oxford UP) 1939 where John Diekhoff observes that Milton's confidence in his ability as a poet came in fact much earlier than his sojourn in Italy.

<sup>29</sup> Ralph A. Haug, YP I. 810 note 67. Haug also states: "Milton's doctrine of inspiration is partly Platonic (e.g., Phaedrus, 265), the belief that God gives directly the ability to make poetry to a few specially chosen persons. These must, however, be persons of learning and ability. Two of his predecessors believed the same. Sidney highly approved what he thought Plato said, 'a verie inspiring of a divine force, farre above man's wit.' A Defense (1595), sig. H1. To Spenser poetry was 'a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by laboure and learning, but adorned by both.'" Argument, October Eclogue. Note 107, YP I.816.

<sup>30</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 816-17.

<sup>31</sup> Shawcross, John Milton 143.

<sup>32</sup> See Shawcross, John Milton 60 where Shawcross in note 1 (303) cites William R. Parker, Milton's Contemporary Reputation (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1940 as his source for the quotation.

<sup>33</sup> Merritt Y. Hughes, Paradise Regained, the Minor Poems, and Samson Agonistes. Introduction (New York: Doubleday, 1937) xvii.

<sup>34</sup> Shawcross, "Decision" 21.

<sup>35</sup> Milton, RCG, YP I. 817. See also note 121 on (818) that explains "delicious." For Milton, the term "means sensuous."

<sup>36</sup> CP 608 for modern spelling but also found in RCG, YP I. 811-812.

<sup>37</sup> CP 669-70 for modern spelling and RCG, YP I. 816-817.

<sup>38</sup> Ralph A. Haug, "Preface," The Reason of Church-Government YP I. 743.

<sup>39</sup> CP 670 and RCG, YP I. 817. Haug interprets amiable as "Worthy of being loved" in note 116, p. 817.

<sup>40</sup> Austin Woolrych, "Oliver Cromwell," A Milton Encyclopedia ed. William B. Hunter 9 vols. (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1978) 2: 97b.

<sup>41</sup> James Holly Hanford "Notes on Milton's Paradise Lost and Other Biblical Scenarios," in The Complete Prose Works of John Milton. Hanford refers the reader to "the fourth outline (on page 40)" of the Trinity Manuscript. "In the Fourth Plan the scenarios is written out consecutively under the title 'Adam's Banishment' (which has

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been altered to ‘Adam Unparadiz’d’) VIII. 588.

<sup>42</sup> Harold Bloom, How to Read and Why, (New York: Touchstone, 2001), 69. Harold Bloom observes that “poetry is the crown of imaginative literature, in my judgment, because it is a prophetic mode.”

<sup>43</sup> Karl Rahner, “Priest and Poet,” The Word: Readings in Theology (New York: P.J. Kennedy, 1964) 3.

<sup>44</sup> Rahner, “Priest and Poet” 2.

<sup>45</sup> Rahner, “Priest and Poet” 25.

<sup>46</sup> Robert N. Essick, “William Blake’s Illuminated Prints, 1788-1822,” William Blake at the Huntington (San Marino: Harry N. Abrams / Huntington Library, 1994) 4.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph A. Wittreich, Visionary Poetics: Milton’s Tradition and His Legacy (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1979) 218 n 5.

<sup>48</sup> Herbert J. C. Grierson, Milton & Wordsworth: Poets and Prophets, 3<sup>rd</sup> Impression (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956) 83.

<sup>49</sup> Grierson 8.

<sup>50</sup> Grierson 9.

<sup>51</sup> Grierson 11.

<sup>52</sup> Grierson 26

<sup>53</sup> Milton, RCG YP I.816.

<sup>54</sup> Grierson vii.

<sup>55</sup> Grierson 28.

<sup>56</sup> Grierson 94.

<sup>57</sup> Grierson 47.

<sup>58</sup> Grierson 115.

<sup>59</sup> Grierson 115.

<sup>60</sup> Grierson 40-41.

<sup>61</sup> Grierson 11-13.

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<sup>62</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard, The Miltonic Setting, Third Impression (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949) 65-66.

<sup>63</sup> Tillyard 67.

<sup>64</sup> Tillyard 69.

<sup>65</sup> D. P. Simpson, ed., Cassell's Latin Dictionary (New York: Macmillan, 2000) 315.

<sup>66</sup> William Kerrigan, The Prophetic Milton (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia) 10.

<sup>67</sup> Kerrigan 265.

<sup>68</sup> Kerrigan 264.

<sup>69</sup> Kerrigan 10.

<sup>70</sup> Kerrigan 10-11.

<sup>71</sup> Kerrigan 2.

<sup>72</sup> Kerrigan 3.

<sup>73</sup> Kerrigan 4.

<sup>74</sup> Kerrigan 6.

<sup>75</sup> Kerrigan 10.

<sup>76</sup> Kerrigan 12.

<sup>77</sup> Kerrigan 169-170. See also Michael Lieb, "Inspiration," A Milton Encyclopedia 4:147-151.

<sup>78</sup> Cassell 631.

<sup>79</sup> See Cassell definition 2 for furor where Cassell defines furor as inspiration, poetic or prophetic frenzy as well as gives the quote by Cicero: "negat sine furore Democritus poetam magnum esse posse" 260. See also "Inspiration." in The New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) where T.V.F. Brogan writes: "At least as early as Homer, inspiration holds a central place in Greek poetics, both as invocation to the gods or more often, the Muses for the gift of memorable speech; and also as claim that when the god takes possession, the poet enters a state of transcendent ecstasy or frenzy, a "poetic madness" of furor poeticus" 135.

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- <sup>81</sup> Kerrigan 47.
- <sup>82</sup> Kerrigan 48.
- <sup>83</sup> Flannagan adds to the notion of furor poeticus: “Neoplatonic theories of poetics, such as that embraced by Marsilio Ficino, held that poets, second only to philosophers, were capable of communing directly with God, through what is called the furor poeticus.” 314.
- <sup>84</sup> Kerrigan 61.
- <sup>85</sup> Kerrigan 81.
- <sup>86</sup> Citation follows at the conclusion of the entire quotation.
- <sup>87</sup> Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr. Visionary Poetics: Milton’s Tradition and His Legacy (San Marino: Kingsport Press, 1979) xvii.
- <sup>88</sup> Wittreich 14.
- <sup>89</sup> Wittreich xiv.
- <sup>90</sup> Wittreich 7.
- <sup>91</sup> Wittreich xx.
- <sup>92</sup> Wittreich xxi.
- <sup>93</sup> By calling upon a line from Vergil’s ninth eclogue: “Bards of Old / And Prophets were the same,” Wittreich notes that “the poet-prophet, both a legislator of reform and a transformer of the world, is charged with authoring poems that, apocalyptic in their intent, may be called more exactly by the name of prophecy” (5). Milton, thus, according to Wittreich, associated himself with “the prophet, who finds his archetype in Christ, his historical type in John of Patmos, and the model for his art in the Book of Revelation” (9). For Wittreich the “analogue” for Milton’s epic prophecy exists in imitating the creation first performed by God (11). The Book of Revelation fuses written and oral tradition by “borrowing literary forms and assimilating prophetic forms from other books of the Bible to create a new orderly design” (18). Thus for Renaissance authors and Wittreich, poets create a universe in their minds that they share with readers through poetry. “God and the poet, then, are creators who relate to one another much as their respective creations relate each to the other” (18). The poet himself an image of God creates a poem as a result of “inspired revelation of the Creation” (19). The poet who creates “literary analogues to God’s creation” becomes “a true visionary” . . . . The literary microcosm thus becomes the prophet’s chief credential: having penetrated the secret of creation—its design—he is uniquely qualified to speak of, to become a shaper of, history, which will bring God’s design to fulfillment” (19).



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- <sup>94</sup> Wittreich 25-26.
- <sup>95</sup> Wittreich 32.
- <sup>96</sup> Wittreich 35
- <sup>97</sup> Hill 15.
- <sup>98</sup> Hill 25.
- <sup>99</sup> Hill 26.
- <sup>100</sup> Hill 75-76. For Milton, poetry and holy orders merge with common characteristics, “but this conviction was not actively confirmed until participation in ecclesiastical dispute led him to embrace a literary vocation, at first in prose, but always looking forward to that time when he would write a great poem that would be ‘doctrinal and exemplary’ to his nation.” See also note 36 on page 212 where Hill cites YP: I: 715 as well as YP: I. 537, 843.
- <sup>101</sup> Hill 102. Hill italicizes *Nativity Ode*.
- <sup>102</sup> Hill 109.
- <sup>103</sup> Hill 110.
- <sup>104</sup> Michael Lieb, The Poetics of the Holy (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1981) xix-xx.
- <sup>105</sup> Lieb xix.
- <sup>106</sup> Lieb xviii. Lieb takes his quote from Octavio Paz, Bow and Lyre, trans. Ruth L. C. Sims (Austin: U of Texas P, 1956) 125.
- <sup>107</sup> Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1982) 13-15.
- <sup>108</sup> Lieb 3.
- <sup>109</sup> Lieb 328.
- <sup>110</sup> Lewis, Preface 38.
- <sup>111</sup> Shawcross, With Mortal Voice: The Creation of Paradise Lost (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1982) 1.

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<sup>112</sup> Flannagan 980.

# Chapter III

## Grace: Its Historical and Scriptural Contexts

**Overview:** This chapter examines what theologians understand about the idea of grace and how religious historians trace its unfolding but shifting nuances through the long history of mankind. By the time Milton writes his epic, thinkers during more than seventeen centuries had considered the reality of grace so that a vast body of implicit and explicit Scriptural and theological teaching lies at Milton's disposal. In preparation for Milton's contribution to the grace discussion, I briefly sketch the etymology of the term first from the Hebrew and Greek forms and then the development of the concept of grace through five historical periods that cover (1) the Old Testament, (2) the New Testament, (3) post Apostolic, (4) Patristic, and (5) Scholastic eras.

### **Milton, PL, and Grace: The Problem for the Contemporary Reader**

The English word grace, both in denotation and connotation, carries multiple layers of meaning in its primary and secondary significance. The OED, beginning with Wyclif in 1382, Gower in 1390, and continuing into the present, has recorded all variations of meaning for interested readers. Reading through the OED, one sees that grace calls forth for mankind the mystery of the divine, the holy, the sacred, the infinite penetrating finite reality, and ultimately something vital for salvation.

Indeed, salvation comes wrapped in such a word. Karl Rahner calls words that "have power over us," that move us to thought or action, "the great words," for "they open the door to great deeds and they sit in judgment over eternities."<sup>1</sup> Rahner observes that "every great word refers to a part of reality, so that for us a gate is mysteriously opened—a gateway into the plumbless depths of reality," for "great words exist because everything that is, is interwoven with everything else and because thus every genuine living word has roots which reach down into the infinite depths."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, Rahner

teaches that “to the poet is entrusted the word, for he is a man who can utter the great words pregnantly”<sup>3</sup> so that “when one of these great words is said, something happens: the object itself confronts the listeners.”<sup>4</sup> As Sir Philip Sidney reminds us in the Defense of Poesy the poet certainly aims “to teach and delight,” but in PL, Milton in delighting readers with his epic narrative also confronts them with issues of Creation and Redemption found in biblical narratives for which he uses both the “great words” of poetry and of Scripture as well —grace, virtue, good, evil—the serious words connected with the economics of salvation, words that give meaning and purpose to existence.

Because grace is profound mystery, ecclesiastical doctrine, and a great word, its complexities have challenged thinkers over the centuries often causing argumentative debate. Robert Gleason observes that in the twentieth century a “slackening interest” in the controversies that excited minds in the previous three centuries has occurred.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, scholars have refocused their study of and presentation of grace. For instance, Thomas Torrance, student of Karl Barth and Oscar Cullman, has re-examined the Church of the Apostolic Fathers to discover “how and why there came about in the history of the doctrine [of grace] so great a divergence from the teaching of the New Testament.” His research gives him a “firm conviction” that a “misunderstanding of the Gospel which took place as early as the second century, with the consequent relapse into non-Christian ideas, has resulted in a doctrine that is largely unbiblical, and that has only been partially corrected by the work of Augustine and the Reformers. The great mistake has been to detach the thought of grace from the person of Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup> Currently, contemporary theological scholars refocus the study of grace within the salvation history of the Church and the individual Christian. Consequently, with the shift in the twentieth

century, as Gleason notes, to the affirmation of “the fact of grace” and “the gifts which accompany it,”<sup>7</sup> rather than to its kinds, classification, and controversies, the reader of PL, perhaps, is unaware of the historical journey of grace into human consciousness and its troubled context during the seventeenth century while Milton writes PL.

The idea of grace connects all religious denominations and bears upon the ecumenical spirit alive in the twenty-first century. So important is grace to man’s relationship with God that it serves as a bond among men who recognize its salvific importance and man’s need of it to persevere on the journey to God. Traditionally, scholars have found man’s justification to come only by reason of the grace of God using Scripture for their theological support and analysis.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, what Milton’s predecessors thought and taught about grace bears on how Milton addresses the question of grace in his own century and how his words affect readers today. In fact, Milton in PL looks at grace from a literary perspective, underscoring its universal significance for all mankind and not just as a debatable issue for theologians. Thus, the concept of grace as Milton found it in the seventeenth century requires its historical context to understand his contribution to the formulation of grace in his epic, for Milton offers a Protestant lay theologian’s voice to a long historical conversation concerning grace.

Having established the sacred calling of Milton and having suggested how the theological insights of Rahner bear on a study of grace and Milton, I briefly survey what mankind knew of grace by the time of Milton. First, I look at PL as a narrative event that Milton wants his reader to imagine occurs before the dawn of time and creation and review the literary scholarship of Lewalski regarding experience. Next, I consider the etymology of the term grace from the Hebrew and Greek forms and then trace the

development of the concept of grace through five historical periods that cover (1) the Old Testament, (2) the New Testament, and (3) post Apostolic, (4) Patristic, and (5) Scholastic eras.

As man's understanding of God develops, theologians recognize as well the divinizing effect of God's action on a person's life. Yet, in the course of time, shifts in the meaning of grace occur as men of God come to understand its far-reaching effects. Theologians and scholars drawing from Sacred Scripture, Patristic writings, and Church Councils in time define the historical relationship between God and man that we experience as "grace," a term that continues to unfold as mankind thinks more deeply on its relationship to the Divine. Certainly, Milton's account of the primeval experience of Adam and Eve with God offers a seventeen-century understanding of grace operating in a human-Divine relationship. Accordingly, I examine changes that occur with the idea of grace through the centuries from the Old Testament through the time of Milton to enrich the notion of grace he embeds within PL.

### **Grace Prior to the Old Testament**

Even though Milton uses Scripture as the basis of his epic, he wants the reader to enter a period prior to recorded history, the dawn of personal consciousness. With Book VIII and Adam's recollection of his own creation (253-356), Milton introduces his reader to the notion of the unity of mankind with Adam called "First Man, of Men innumerable ordained / First Father" (297-298) and suggests a primeval period with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden that takes his reader into the long, dark period prior to the fifteen hundred years of recorded history contained in the Old Testament. Milton's reader can only speculate upon the dawning realization of primitive man's experience of

transcendence, his sense of a spiritual existence reaching out in freedom to know more of the intensity and luminosity of being and of his material and immaterial world. Even as the narrator recounts Adam's first experience of God in "shape divine" (295) that comes to the first-waking Adam as the voice of "thy Guide" (298), and who Adam recalls "from among the trees appeared, Presence Divine" (313-314), the reader receives a sense of the unity of being and holiness of "the Other" that prelapsarian man may have experienced at the beginning of creation, that Scripture enlarges upon, and that the poet develops for his reader's imagination that urges the reader to consider the dawn of awareness. Georgia Christopher remarks on this scene noting that "at the beginning of psychic life stands God's word, not as an Augustinian faculty or light of Reason, but as a word having the specifically literary character that it does in Reformation commentary. Milton thereby suggests that man possesses a sensus divinitatis, an innate knowledge of God impressed upon him by divine speech during his earliest hours in the Garden."<sup>9</sup> PL literarily prefigures the dawn of the sacred and grace into human consciousness for Adam and Eve. The reader views a long period of time from Eden to the twenty-first century.

The reader can actually trace incipient beginnings and development of such concepts in ancient religions as well as classical Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman literature. Further, archeological finds among tombs and grave sites indicate that during the pre-biblical period man grew in self-consciousness and understanding so that at some point within the oral tradition of a pre-Biblical Period certain people within their superstition, idolatry, and polytheism were able to accept the notion of a living God who gave direction to their lives even in an obscure way. Later, philosophers question reality, search for ethical behavior, and challenge religious attitudes and the self-centeredness of

the gods. Dramatists such as Euripides probe the Dionysian mystery cults and Sophocles examines myths and oracles. If grace means a sharing in the life of God, then as they move into self-awareness, men and women in some way must have experienced the phenomena we now call grace, but they had no term for it until the rabbis and teachers pondered its reality and meaning. Consequently, if one considers the Old Testament as the final preparation for the revelation that occurs with Jesus Christ and the grace of His life, one recognizes foreshadowing and prefiguration in ancient attitudes prior to the patriarchal age recorded in the Pentateuch.

In PL Milton suggests that the idea of created grace existed in the mind of God prior to creation and certainly has existed since the Fall with the contrition of Adam and Eve. In Book III the Father explains that “Man falls deceiv’d” by Satan, but that “Man therefore shall find grace” (3.130-131), using the term grace as a gift freely bestowed by Himself. The Son Himself adds to the Father’s pronouncement by naming the Father’s speech gracious, from the Latin gratiosus meaning “showing favor.” The Son speaks: “O Father, gracious was that word which clos’d / Thy sovran sentence, that Man should find grace” (III.145). In summation, both Father and Son speak of and recognize grace prior to the primal disobedience of Adam and Eve knowing that in light of the rebellion of the “ingrate” Satan and his legions whom The Father created “just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (3.98-99), mankind would fall as a revengeful prey of Satan.

At the close of Book X, Adam and Eve, after falling into disobedience to the one divine prohibition and their bitter recriminations against each other, stand in “repentant” prayer at their place of judgment and sentence, and at once, as Book XI opens, Adam and



Eve experience “Prevenient Grace” (10.3), a term first used by Augustine and later by scholastic and Reformed theologians, that grants justification to Adam and Eve and to their descendants who repent of sin. Prevenient grace removes “The stony from thir hearts” (10.4), signifying that the grace of contrition so moves their wills that they repent of their disobedience, turns their wills to good again, and re-establishes a right relationship with God. Book III introduces the concept of grace while Book XI notes a specific type of grace that requires some awareness to appreciate what Milton does with the theology of grace. Georgia Christopher remarks that “it was important to Milton to show that faith was not a steady state, but one with fluctuating growth in which ‘subsequent grace’ repeats with variations the paradigm of ‘prevenient grace.’” She differentiates between the two types of grace by noting St. Augustine’s distinction between prevenient grace that heals and subsequent grace that strengthens. St. Augustine “characteristically insists that prevenient grace is ‘that by which we were chosen, called, and justified before we have done any work at all,’ while subsequent grace comes through experience and works, and brings us ‘certainty.’”<sup>10</sup> The concept of grace is thus critical to an understanding of PL.

In the twentieth century, theologian and philosopher Karl Rahner, student of Martin Heidegger, likewise implies that grace and creation occur together as he examines salvation history. In fact, Rahner deliberately highlights the subtitle of section five of Chapter V in Foundations of Christian Faith with quotation marks as “Primeval Revelation” to indicate that he considers material in this section as theologically suggestive rather than historically accurate in its speculative nature.<sup>11</sup> Rahner observes that by creation man “is radically different and distant from God as the absolute and holy

mystery, and at the same time through grace he is absolutely close to this mystery.”<sup>12</sup> He further notes that at the time of creation man must have experienced “the beginning of God’s primeval transcendental and categorical revelation.”<sup>13</sup> Rahner teaches that a “transcendental revelation” reveals God in the historicity of all nations just as He revealed himself in Jewish and Christian history, that a person exists within his own special history, and that the place of a “possible revelation of God” to man must exist within that personal historicity. Grace, what Rahner thus calls an “existential,” describes how we within our nature are “called to what transcends our existence, to life with God,” and we are “able to find God in the particularities of all history.”<sup>14</sup> The personal implications of a graced relation with the Divine for the reader of Rahner make his text invaluable for the light it sheds on PL.

Barbara Lewalski tackles the issue of experience in an essay that bears on the theological anthropological investigation into man’s transcendent awareness of God that Rahner pursues and supports the experience that Milton gives a reader of PL. Experience takes many forms such as one’s personal sense, psychological, intellectual or spiritual experience, or the experiences of life, of events, and of others. Experience, however, is complex as well and needs evaluation by time, the individual, and perhaps the community that one’s experience is revelatory and not delusional. Lewalski explores “the ways in which Milton’s great poems thematize the encounter of divine revelation and human experience” and remarks on the importance of the “central and highly complex role” that the epic “accords to human experience in glossing the authoritative divine texts that ground the action.” Although Lewalski addresses only four relevant Scriptural texts on whose hinges or action “the epic turns” and that Milton establishes as

divine decrees (the Son as head of the angels, the institution of marriage, the prohibition, and the protevangelium), she does speak to the issue of experience within PL for the “characters, bard, and readers” that bear and “affirm God’s goodness—which is to say the human condition.” In other words, her focus on experience offers readers struggling with the epic text support from within the scholarly interpretative community on the value of personal experience in response to the epic. Lewalski’s conclusion offers encouragement: “We may find that by thematizing the role of experience as he does, Milton himself makes a space for revision in his poem’s ideology, to meet the experience of future readers.”<sup>15</sup> Just as contemporary business leaders, psychologists, and doctors have found newer models to meet the needs of employees, clients, and patients, so Lewalski finds room for experience as an element in PL noting rightly that experience comprises many elements that need clarification, responsible judgment, and recognition of evidence.

### **Hebrew and Greek Forms of Grace**

Etymologically and historically, I rely on Thomas Torrance for understanding the transitions that occur with the term grace. His published dissertation, The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers, traces the original and applied senses of grace through the Patristic period in both Greek and Hebrew. Since there exists no word for grace as such in the Old Testament as there is in Greek with its choice of charis, scholars look to words that embody the meaning rather than the exact term. The idea of grace from its earliest ancient Hebrew forms as ‘aheb (unsolicited, unmerited love),<sup>16</sup> hen (unmerited, generous, benevolent favor granted by a gracious God but translated in the Septuagint as charis, favor to someone in need), and hesed<sup>17</sup> (God’s kindness in selecting Israel for salvation

and for tying Himself in love to them, in other words,+- in a covenant relationship between God and Israel) are early terms that demonstrate shifting meanings of grace even within the Jewish community but that convey the benevolence, generosity, and unsolicited love of God for man and Israel.<sup>18</sup> Gleason observes that hesed is “the supreme word that sums up the attitude of Jahweh to Israel.” It describes “a relationship of fidelity in which Jahweh prefigures the relationship of Christ to the Christian soul,”<sup>19</sup> whereas Torrance sees hesed “as the great sacramental word of the Old Testament”<sup>20</sup> by which God binds Himself to man in unchanging love. Accordingly, while hesed occurs concomitantly with covenant, three Hebraic terms ‘ahab, hen, and hesed permit the reader to glimpse early attitudes binding Creator toward creature that permeates Hebrew culture.

The Greek charis used by Homer<sup>21</sup> and onwards in the culture means an outward “loveliness, charm, beauty, grace, or comeliness,” but also, in reference to something immaterial, charis alters somewhat to indicate “consummation, perfection.”<sup>22</sup> Charis arises from classical roots in the verb chairō in its various forms where, for example, the future tense means “to make glad,” or “to rejoice” while in other forms of the active, middle, and passive voices it means “to become or be glad”<sup>23</sup> and in its noun form as charma with a first meaning as “joy, pleasure” and a second meaning as “a source or cause of joy, gratification, or comfort, a joy or delight.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, as translated by Crosby and Schaeffer, charis has taken an inward, but abbreviated, turn to mean “grace, gratitude, and favor.”<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Liddell and Scott define grace in its external forms as “outward grace, grace, loveliness,” but in a second meaning charis signifies an internal expression experienced by a doer as “kindness, good-will,” or by a receiver as “the sense of favour received, thanks, gratitude.” A third meaning as “a favor done” by one for

someone, “a grace, kindness, boon”<sup>26</sup> bears similarities to New Testament usage, but these translations never quite capture the intensity of God’s unsolicited love for mankind found in the Hebrew words. Moving forward to the oldest translation of the Old Testament into Greek, William Manson in his essay “Grace in the New Testament” observes that grace acquires a “special capacity” in the Septuagint as “now for the first time it came into relation to the Divine Being through being applied to his favour and to the blessedness which that favour imparts. But charis never in the LXX attains the constitutive fundamental sense which it bears in the New Testament.”<sup>27</sup> Yet, charis in its development of meaning through the classical and Hellenistic periods hints at the richness the word suggests in describing the relationship of the Creator to humanity.

### **Grace in the Old Testament**

Biblical scholars recognize major themes connected with grace in the Old Testament. Charles Baumgartner’s La Grace du Christ translated by Edmund J. Fortman emphasizes issues of grace in the early Church. For example, Baumgartner calls the announcement of God’s saving intention and his preparation of man for salvation through the law and prophets an “Alliance” between God and Israel that he finds confirmed when Yahweh descends in a cloud, stands before Moses, and tells him his name, “The Lord,” in the Book of Exodus: “The Lord, The Lord, / a God merciful and gracious (hen), / slow to anger / and bounding in steadfast love (kindness / hesed) and faithfulness, / keeping steadfast love (hesed) for the thousandth generation (34: 6-7).<sup>28</sup> Baumgartner notes a shift in grace when Hosea employs a “formula” used by people in their human relationships that even though Israel/man rejects the love of God, as a faithful spouse God remains true to his covenant. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah give God characteristics

of a love of a man for his wife and of a father for his children, a God with a heart who calls on man to change his heart.<sup>29</sup> Yet, the Lord also changes the hearts of men. Baumgartner notes that two principal themes that announce this interior transformation are those of spirit and justice.” He discovers spirit in “spiritual regeneration in the community and individuals” and in the practice of interior justice or “the gift of a new reality which is superior to that which existed heretofore.”<sup>30</sup> In the Psalms the word grace occurs but twice and then only in an outward sense as in Ps. 45:2: “grace is poured upon your lips” and Ps. 84:11: “For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; / he bestows favor (grace in 1611 King James edition) and honor.” However, what becomes evident in Isaiah is that the Alliance now extends to all nations (2:1-2) as people “beat their swords into plowshares, / and their spears into pruning hooks” (2: 4). Wisdom literature continues the theme of the interior law written on the heart but also encourages the development of wisdom that “is a breath of the power of God” (7:25), who “renews all things; / in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; / for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom” (7:27). Thus, even as early as the end of the Old Testament era, the meaning of grace expands from hen, the benevolent or merciful and gracious Yahweh, to its meaning in the Septuagint as “favorable regard or finding favor,” to hesed, the loving kindness of Yahweh to Israel, then to the external law guiding human relationships, and finally to the law and wisdom of the heart that makes man God-like.

### **Grace in the Synoptic Writers, St. John, and St. Paul**

When the reader approaches the authors of the New Testament, one meets grace in a new light as something uniquely expressed in the manifestation or revelation of

God's love in the human person of His Son who assumes sin and guilt for all mankind. In the New Testament charis radically shifts from a concept to its embodiment in the person of Christ who reveals the Father and the Father's action in Himself. Torrance observes that in the New Testament charis "outdistances its etymological roots" when the term grace becomes "identical with Jesus Christ in person and word and deed."<sup>31</sup> The believer under the influence of the Spirit of the Risen Lord henceforth recognizes not an abstract notion of grace but its concrete appearance in Christ. Indeed, one finds that the "other side of faith is grace"<sup>32</sup> and that the grace of God in Christ opens into the Kingdom of God. Evangelists Matthew and Mark never use the term grace, but St. Luke uses charis, grace, eight times. According to Torrance, Luke uses it "in accordance with contemporary usage," while St. John in the prologue to his Gospel uses it three times both in an Old Testament and Pauline sense.<sup>33</sup> Although the Gospels never have Christ use the term grace, he was "full of grace" (Jn: 1:14), while in His person his disciples and Apostles meet and came to recognize the source of grace. What amazes those who hear Jesus preach is the authority with which He speaks: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, / because he has anointed me / to bring good news to the poor" (Lk 4:16). He identifies himself with the Father in grace, speech, and act. After his death and resurrection, the men and women who follow him come to believe that the Father in giving them Jesus as teacher had also redeemed them from sin by His life, suffering and resurrection. In knowing Him and experiencing his presence in their lives, minds, and hearts they experience what St. Paul tells the Corinthians: "the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind" (1 Cor.1: 4-5).

Biblical scholars likewise link grace with the “Kingdom of God.” Gregory Stevens in The Life of Grace understands “kingdom as the central point of the message of the Synoptic Gospels” with the kingdom characterized as that of the Father as the disciples learn to pray in The Our Father.<sup>34</sup> Joseph Bonsirven in Theology of the New Testament analyzes Christ’s mission to establish the “kingdom of God,” a term he states has a “wider significance” than the narrow one that refers to the teachings of Jesus. The term “kingdom of God” rarely occurs in the Old Testament, but divine kingship as dominion over all creation was a biblical notion based on the classical political reality of kings and kingdoms. Bonsirven states that under the instruction of the rabbis ‘kingdom of God’ implies “acceptance of the commandments” and “acceptance of the yoke of heaven,” for it “is a theocratic expression, but used less in a Messianic than in a moral and religious sense; it was a fully comprehensive term and ‘pregnant with a wealth of meaning,’ it was tolerably widespread, and every mention of it was bound to arouse an echo in men’s hearts.”<sup>35</sup> In the New Testament Jesus uses the term to proclaim his own doctrine; he never defines the kingdom which he generally speaks of in the present tense. To accept the kingdom of God would necessarily bring the believer into a relationship of favor of grace with the Divine, an idea quite compatible with PL and this dissertation.

St. John’s Gospel sees grace as the life of God (Jn: 6: 47-51) now available to men through faith who believe in the Word made flesh (Jn: 1-14), as a light to enlighten everyone (Jn:1:9), as a force or power to avoid sin (I Jn: 3:6), and as a presence: “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (Jn: 14:23). For Gregory Stevens, John’s Gospel



points the way for a Christian to move from the world of darkness and sin into truth and light, “a profound revelation of the doctrine of grace.”<sup>36</sup>

St. Paul uses charis more than any other New Testament writer by developing a primary sense of the word as well as an applied sense. According to Torrance in his epistles St. Paul uses grace primarily as “the act of divine intervention” in history with grace dynamically opening “a new world” through the Cross. With the applied sense, St. Paul’s usage of the terms “is more elusive,” even as “the focus of attention is upon a particular application of grace” as it grabs man “in an act of forgiving and creative love.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, for St. Paul, grace always comes as a gift of God, a manifestation of God’s power in terms of man’s justification, salvation, and sanctification but also an invitation for all mankind to enter into a another form of life—a supernatural one with emphasis on what God gives [my emphasis] through the Spirit, a principle of life that marks a soul “with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit (Eph.1:13), rather than what man receives [my emphasis]: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2: 8-9). Is this not a reversal of the Hellenistic agoura economy where buyer and seller haggle for the best deal? According to St. Paul, man’s redemption and the remission of his sin belong to a new economy of justice as well as a new interpretation of law in contrast to the dispensation of the Old Testament: “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under the law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). With St. Paul grace assumes a positive quality of uniting man to God even as it enables man to removes what is ungodly in his life (Eph. 1:7).

## **Grace in the Post Apostolic and Patristic Eras**

Historians distinguish three groups of Church Fathers who develop, teach, and transmit church doctrine within the Primitive Church. Chronologically in the Roman Church the deaths of Gregory the Great (d. 604) in the West and John of Damascus (d. c.749) in the East close the period of the Church Fathers, although the Eastern Orthodox Church considers the period still open. These early Christian writers organize principles of doctrine that influence the Church to this day. History calls Apostolic Fathers those men who had contact with the Apostles or lived one or two generations after the Apostles and who lived in the late first century and early second century, such as St. Clement of Rome (d. c. 96) the third pope who had known St. Peter and St. Paul, St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. c.107) and St. Polycarp of Smyrna (d. c.155), disciples of St. John, who transmitted ideas of grace that influenced later writers of the Patristic period.

The Greek Fathers are so called because they write in Greek, live in the East, ground their theology on Johannine principles, and develop a doctrine of grace through participation in sacraments established and supported by the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and indwelling Spirit that Christ bequeathed to His Apostles and Church. Fortman notes that “Torrance finds grace in the Apostolic Fathers no longer the absolutely predominant factor that it is in the New Testament. The theology of the Apostolic Fathers represents a corrosion of the faith both from the side of Judaism and the side of Hellenism, because the basic significance of grace was not grasped.”<sup>38</sup> A writer such as Irenaeus (130-202), the first great theologian, sharpens doctrine combating Gnosticism (from the Greek gnosis, knowledge) which develops during the second and third centuries and teaches that only the intellectual elite could possess faith. In Adversus

Haereses, Irenaeus, however, does not define grace but uses it in a vague or general sense.<sup>39</sup>

After Irenaeus, historians divide the Greek Fathers into the Alexandrians and the Cappadocians who shape the direction of the development of grace through doctrine. The Alexandrians include four theologians: Clement, Origen, Cyril, and Athanasius. Clement (ca. 150-215) teaches man's privilege of being created in the image and likeness of God, while Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386) in his Catecheses urges the necessity of "a sincere faith" to receive the "fulfillment" of grace of the Holy Spirit who impresses "his seal on each of your souls."<sup>40</sup> Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) uses charis when he refers to benevolence in God; Origen (ca. 185-254), the greatest of the Alexandrian thinkers, teaches both the necessity of grace and the generosity of God.<sup>41</sup> Athanasius (296-373) first "uses charis in a somewhat unusual sense: the order or the economy of grace [my emphasis], that new economy which came with Christ, the new global world order set in motion by God in Christ."<sup>42</sup> St. John Chrysostom (347-407) and three theologians of the fourth century comprise the Cappadocians: Basil (d. 379), Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394) brother of Basil, and St. Gregory Nazianzen (d. 390). Living in the aftermath of the Arian controversy argued at the Council of Nicea (325), the Cappadocians develop a doctrine of grace in conjunction with their defense of the Trinity as well as clarify the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and Son and the human-divine natures of Christ whose Spirit illuminates man.

The Latin Fathers, living in the West of the Roman Empire, place more emphasis on morality and the need for actual grace than the Greek Fathers. Among the Latin Fathers, Tertullian (ca. 160-225) is the first writer to use charis or mention grace.<sup>43</sup> He

also anticipates the doctrine of original sin, the future development of distinctions between grace and nature, later problems between grace and free will, and the diminution of the efficacy of grace. Cyprian (d.258?), bishop of Carthage and a significant theologian of North Africa between Tertullian and Augustine, emphasizes the wounded human nature of Adam's descendents, while Ambrose (ca. 339-397), bishop of Milan, introduces individualism into morality by defining the duties of priests.

Ambrose's disciple, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) known as the Doctor of Grace, understands faith and its initial beginning in man as God's free gift of grace unmerited by man. In his works, Augustine examines the relationship of grace and freedom, grace and law, sin, especially Original Sin,<sup>44</sup> and the restoration of grace necessary for the moral life and individual salvation. Augustine struggles first against Pelagianism, which teaches that salvation occurs by man's efforts and that one does not need the help of grace (condemned by the Sixteenth Council of Carthage in May 418 and again by the Council of Ephesus in 431), and second against semi-Pelagianism, which holds that the beginning of faith occurs in man independently of grace. (The Second Council of Orange in 529 condemned semi-Pelagianism citing Philippians 1:6 ["I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you, will bring it completion by the day of Jesus Christ."], Philippians 1:29 ["For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well."], and Ephesians 2:8 ["For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God . . ."]; in 433 Pope Boniface II affirmed the Council's decision.) Stephen Duffy summarizes Augustine's theology of grace:

Grace is primarily caritas, which moves one to love God and neighbor and to delight in created goods according to their relation to God. Without grace all willing and doing are sinful. Charity is the indwelling and operation of the Spirit, not a created quality of the person. The initial grace of conversion, faith, and forgiveness is gratuitous and efficacious, neither earned by any prior good deed nor accepted by independent, autonomous consent. The subsequent grace of charity does require free human cooperation which is necessary for salvation, and which charity facilitates but never substitutes for.<sup>45</sup>

After Augustine, Western theology develops as ““a series of footnotes””<sup>46</sup> to the teachings of the Doctor of Grace, but in taking this direction, theology changes from a focus on Eastern mysticism to Western legalism.

The earliest Fathers had used the word pneuma (wind, air, breath, breath of life, spirit, inspiration, even a Spirit, or spiritual being)<sup>47</sup> before charis which places emphasis on grace as an inner principle. This notion of grace develops differently with Greek Fathers of the Eastern Roman Empire than it does with the Latin Fathers of the Western Roman Empire. The former have to adjust Semitic thought patterns to their culture rather than the latter who, pre-occupied with Pelagianism, focus on the nature of sin and man’s role in salvation. With the early Greek Fathers both pneuma and charis describe the objective gift of grace so that charis implies the “gratuity of the gift, and pneuma its supernatural character, the fact that it is a participation in the divine life.”<sup>48</sup> Gleason notes that Tertullian, first among the Latin Fathers to employ charis, uses it as pneuma or divine power with the emphasis on grace as an interior action of God on the soul. The Latin Fathers stress “not so much the Pauline notion of charis as the Pauline notion of pneuma—a spirit, a force, an élan by which God directs and draws man to eternal life.”<sup>49</sup> St. Augustine, a Latin Father, develops the idea of grace as therapeutic, healing the wounds of concupiscence. Thus, two views of grace occur that have characterized

Eastern and Western spirituality: the Greek Fathers, seeing grace as a divinizing factor, emphasize the mystical side of man, while the Latin fathers, understanding the healing factors in grace, emphasize its assistance in leading a moral life necessary for salvation.

Torrance observes that grace in the teaching of the Patristic Fathers does not possess the “radical character” that it has in the New Testament. Rather than seeing the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Christ as critical events in God’s self communication and revelation to all men, the Fathers focus on “God’s call to a new life in obedience to revealed truth. Grace, as far as it was grasped was subsidiary to that.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, man’s response to God becomes more important than God’s gift of divine life. Consequently, two influences affect the post-apostolic Church: the legalism of Judaism with its emphasis on works and self-righteousness influenced by the Septuagint and the naturalism of Hellenism with its thought structures based on reason rather than revelation. In the clutches of Judaism, the early Church Fathers see the Gospel as a New Law with grace in a secondary position. Christianity becomes a way of living a sinless life rather than a response to the gift of God. The Apostolic Fathers, Greek by birth, education, and culture, find Hebrew thought patterns such as revelation difficult to integrate; they fail to grasp “the basic significance of grace” seen “in their attitude to all the main doctrines of the N.T. Gospel. It was not that they were opposed to them, but they did not grasp them properly.”<sup>51</sup> Torrance makes three important points regarding grace and the Apostolic Fathers: 1) “Grace became related to the continuance of the Christian life, rather than to the decisive motion of God’s love as the presupposition of the whole Christian life.”<sup>52</sup> 2) “Grace was now regarded as something Pneumatic.” Grace and the Holy Spirit become synonymous but with the Holy Spirit seen as a form of

“spiritual energy” rather than as the Spirit of the Christ of the New Testament: “It was a phenomenon, a pneumatic energy implanted in the soul. Thus the relation of grace and man came to be thought of sub-personally, as with cause and effect instead of as word and faith.”<sup>53</sup> 3) Moreover, in a sense the Church takes charge of grace. “The Church as the body of Christ was looked on as the depository of pneumatic grace, which might be dispensed in sacramentalist fashion after the analogy of the mystery religions.”<sup>54</sup> Yet, Christianity by stressing revelation and justification by grace possesses the power to integrate both Hebrew and Hellenistic opposition.

Eventually, the divinizing power of grace permeates the teaching of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. According to Richard P. McBrien when Augustine accepts the Eastern Fathers teaching of the divinization of man by his participation through Christ in the life of God, he and other Latin Fathers “made it the foundation of the whole theology of grace in the medieval period, as is particularly evident in Thomas Aquinas.”<sup>55</sup> Patrides notes that the West composes treatises about grace while the Eastern Church says little about it. “Western Christians, from Augustine to Luther after him, broke it open, dissected it, and debated it. None doubted its existence, all lived it, for grace is an experience.”<sup>56</sup> During the next period, the concept of grace becomes less simple as Aquinas clarifies its nature and function.

### **Grace in the Scholastic Period**

Theologians grapple with the process and order of justification for the unregenerate person because they have to account for different kinds of grace mentioned by St. Paul and St. Augustine. Long before the Puritan controversies over the Covenant and preparation for grace occur in New England in the seventeenth century, scholastic

theologians had formulated reasoned arguments about the process of justification. The Franciscan Bonaventure—minister General of his order, Cardinal of the Church, and canonized Saint—has found more acceptance by Protestant theologians since he is less Aristotelian than other scholastics and tackles issues such as law that the Reformers regarded as important in the Christian life. In his short summa the Breviloquium, written during 1253-1257 while he lectured at the University of Paris, Bonaventure notes that four acts “converge in the justification of the impious: “the insertion of grace, the expulsion of guilt, contrition, and a motion of the will.”<sup>57</sup> While Thomas Aquinas in his Summa Theologica notes four acts as well, he does not follow the same order as Bonaventure.

Hence in their natural order the first in the justification of the ungodly is the infusion of grace; the second is the movement of free choice towards God; the third is the movement of free choice towards sin, for he who is being justified detests sin because it is against God, and thus the movement of free choice towards God naturally precedes the movement of free choice toward sin, since it is its cause and reason; the fourth and last is the remission of sin. . . .<sup>58</sup>

Thomas posits a two-fold action of the will whereas Bonaventure notes the will in action at the end of the process. George Tavard explains that Bonaventure “understood it to be at the same time the fruit of a double action of God, who gives grace and expels guilt, and the result of the first human response to God’s action, when the sinner becomes contrite. God’s action is anterior to any human act, and, since the remission of guilt is effected by the insertion of grace, the penitent’s contrition follows and does not precede forgiveness.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, scholastic theologians and their commentators in efforts to clarify the process of grace and the order of justification contribute to future debates that encourage morbid self-scrutiny characteristic of later generations. The Aristotelian itch



to classify everything theological often keeps God from being God by making Him conform to human reason and its need to organize.

Thomas Aquinas, Scholastic theologian of the Dominican order, systematizes grace by categorizing various types of grace. St. Thomas is the first theologian to note the distinction between sanctifying, or habitual grace whereby the Holy Spirit dwells within a person's soul, and actual or transitory grace whereby a person receives immediate assistance in the performance of an act. In De Veritate Aquinas addresses the nature of grace and defines specific types of grace. Noting first that grace has two senses—"something which is given gratis" and the "favorable reception which one gets from another"—Aquinas divides grace into two broad categories: "grace gratuitously given (gratia data) or gratuitous grace" such as gifts of prophecy and wisdom necessary not so much for the recipient as for the benefit of others and "ingratiatory grace," now called sanctifying or habitual grace (gratia gratum faciens), by which a person becomes "pleasing to God" with implications of a divine welcoming, accepting, and loving a person who "is accordingly said to have the grace of God not only from his being loved by God with a view to eternal life but also from his being given some gift (ingratiatory grace) by which he is worthy of eternal life."<sup>60</sup> In Article five of De Veritate Thomas expands on ingratiatory grace indicating that "it is impossible for more than one grace to be in one man,"<sup>61</sup> but he distinguishes grace as operating when one looks at its effects in a person which God alone brings about and as cooperating [my emphases], or actual grace, when God requires man's use of free choice to produce an effect.<sup>62</sup> He likewise distinguishes between antecedent (gratia praeveniens) and subsequent grace [my emphases] as the first informs the subject with grace or justifies the sinner, while the

second grace acts on the will of the justified subject. Thomas Aquinas and all scholastics, Peter Ramus (1515-1572) philosopher and author of Dialectic or Logic, and the Reformers divide and subdivide grace.

However, even in Aquinas the notion of grace shifts. He expresses his mature understanding of grace in his Treatise on Grace (I-2, q. 109-114) in the Summa Theologica where he views grace as actual or habitual depending on whether it operates on a person or the person cooperates with grace. Hence, to use contemporary terminology, both habitual (sanctifying) and actual (gratia gratis data) or transient graces may be either operating or cooperating. If God acts and a person is passive, the grace is operative; if a person acts in response to a grace, the grace is cooperating. Even if grace produces multiple effects in the soul, grace is still one [my emphasis] so that, as Duffy observes, a distinction “between grace as prevenient and subsequent, operative and cooperative is considered notional, not real.”<sup>63</sup> Hence, Aquinas achieves a synthesis using Augustine’s idea of grace as healing a human nature racked by sin by combining that notion with the Patristic sense of grace as divinizing man. Aquinas understands “grace as both the healing of human nature wounded by sin and as the elevating of human nature to participation in the divine life.”<sup>64</sup> For Aquinas, therefore, grace has five effects on a soul: healing, desiring good, carrying out the good proposed, persevering in doing good, and reaching eternal glory.<sup>65</sup>

Theologians in subsequent centuries extend Aquinas’s theology of grace to conform to maturing ideas of human nature so that grace becomes more external as conferred by the reception of the sacraments than internal as the gratuitous indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Further distinctions to Thomas’s theology of grace occur in the Post-

Reformation Period when apologists for the Reformation, despite the classifications of Ramus and the Puritans, order grace in other ways. William Perkins, a Puritan Divine, reduces grace to three kinds—preventing, working, and co-working grace, while Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), German Protestant Reformer, does not bother to name any kinds. Generally, Reformers accept prevenient grace as the grace preparing the person for good acts and subsequent grace as the grace assisting the person in continued good action.

These centuries of discussion and classification about grace serve as background for two little known but important controversies on the nature of grace that develop as the sixteen century ends and the seventeenth begins that give rise to clerical debates within the Catholic Church and within Dutch Calvinism. As C. A. Patrides rightly observes “the concept of grace, always far larger than any conciliar anvil, could not be hammered into any narrow confining dogma” because “grace is so all-encompassing that its frame of reference is that of the Christian faith itself. Its manifestation is a mystery which defies analysis, yet more than half of Christian literature deals with it.”<sup>66</sup> Milton will enter this theological minefield.

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Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Karl Rahner, "Priest and Poet," The Word: Readings in Theology (New York: P.J. Kennedy, 1964) 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Rahner, "Priest and Poet" 7.

<sup>3</sup> Rahner, "Priest and Poet" 9.

<sup>4</sup> Rahner, "Priest and Poet" 8.

<sup>5</sup> Robert W. Gleason, S. J., Grace (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1996; previously published by Oliver and Boyd, 1948) v.

<sup>7</sup> Gleason 1.

<sup>8</sup> See for example: Jn 1:12-18: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. Rom 8:14-17: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba, Father' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if in fact we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him" 2 Pet 1:3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Georgia Christopher, Milton and the Science of the Saints (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 147-148.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Note 12, 182.

<sup>11</sup> Karl Rahner, "5. On the Structure of the Actual History of Revelation," Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 162. "Insofar as man's constitutional transcendence, his origins, always involve being situated in concrete history as in a beginning and within a horizon which is prior to him in his freedom, and insofar as this constitution is both logically and really, although perhaps not temporally and tangibly, antecedent to his free and sinful self-interpretation, we can speak of the beginning of God's transcendental and categorical revelation in paradise, that is, of a primeval transcendental and categorical revelation" 162.

<sup>12</sup> Rahner 162.

<sup>13</sup> Rahner 162.

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<sup>14</sup> William V. Dych, "Theology in a New Key," A World of Grace, ed. Leo J. Donovan (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown UP, 1995) 13.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton: Divine Revelation and the Poetics of Experience," Milton Studies XXVII (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1992) 3-21. Cited again within the paragraph: 4, 4, 19, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas F. Torrance uses 'ahēb' while Robert W. Gleason uses ahab.

<sup>17</sup> See Thierry Maertens, O.S.B. "The Merciful God," Bible Themes: A Source Book (Bruges: Biblica, 1964) where he notes that hesed "means everything that links together members of a community: kindness, good will, affection, goodness, etc . . . Moreover, it is often accompanied by 'justice'" 39.

Additionally Maertens writes: "The principal Hebrew word for the 'mercy' of God (hesed) is the same word used to press the duties of mutual assistance which arise from a natural community or from a contractual bond. There is a contract between God and the people. The 'mercy' of God is the way in which God fulfills His contractual obligations: by faithfulness, help and love. But this 'covenant' is not a bilateral contract: it arises from the freely given initiative of God alone. It can almost be said that God is the only contracting party. That is why one speaks of the hesed of God, and not of that of man. Thus the mercy of God assumes also the aspect of a free gift." Later in Jewish history hesed became synonymous with berith (covenant) 39.

<sup>18</sup> Torrance 10-18.

<sup>19</sup> Gleason 18.

<sup>20</sup> Torrance 15.

<sup>21</sup> Hesiod, Works and Days, trans. R. M. Frazer (Norman: U. of Oklahoma P, 1983) 65 (charm, [bodily beauty]); Homer, Iliad, trans. Martin Hammond (New York: Penguin, 1987) 14.181-3 (And she dressed herself in an immortal robe, which Athene had made for her in fine-napped [beautiful] cloth); Homer, Odyssey, revised trans. E. V. Rieu (New York: Penguin, 1991) 6. 235 (She endowed his head and shoulders with beauty); Odyssey 8.175 (deficient in the graceful art of speech i.e. beautiful words) and Odyssey (glowing with beauty) 18. 298.

<sup>22</sup> Richard John Cunliffe, A Lexicon pf the Homeric Dialect (First published London: Blackie and Son, 1924. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1963) 417-418.

<sup>23</sup> Cunliffe 415.

<sup>24</sup> Cunliffe 418.

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<sup>25</sup> Henry L. Crosby and John N. Schaeffer, An Introduction to Greek (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1928) 31.

<sup>26</sup> A Lexicon Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 778.

<sup>27</sup> William Manson, "Grace in the New Testament," The Doctrine of Grace, ed. W. T. Whitley (London: SCM Press, 1931). Edmund J. Fortman, S.J. in The Theology of Man and Grace: Commentary, (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966) inserts pages 33-40 from Manson into his text with appropriate documentation. This reference occurs in Fortman, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Baumgartner, S.J., La Grace du Christ (Desclee, 1963). Fortman includes as an excerpt pp. 15-19 in his text. This citation is from Fortman, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Baumgartner quoted by Fortman, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Baumgartner quoted by Fortman, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Torrance 21.

<sup>32</sup> Torrance 35.

<sup>33</sup> Torrance 22.

<sup>34</sup> P. Gregory Stevens O. S. B., The Life of Grace (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963) 2.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Bonsirven, Theology of the New Testament (Westminster, MD: Newman P), 1963, 35.

<sup>36</sup> Stevens 49.

<sup>37</sup> Torrance 29-30.

<sup>38</sup> Fortman 81.

<sup>39</sup> Gleason 58.

<sup>40</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, from Catech 3, 1-3: PG 33,426-430 in The Liturgy of the Hours, II (New York: Catholic Book P, 1976) 1714-15.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen J. Duffy, The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology (Collegeville: Liturgical P, 1993) 52.

<sup>42</sup> Gleason 58.

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- <sup>43</sup> Gleason 60.
- <sup>44</sup> See John Milton. "Christian Doctrine" in The Complete Prose Works of John Milton, ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-82). "Apparently Augustine, in his writings against Pelagius was the first to call this ORIGINAL SIN. He used the word original, I suppose, because in the origin of generation of man this sin was transmitted to posterity by our first parents. But it that is what he meant, the term is too narrow, because this evil desire, this law of sin, was not only inbred in us, but also took possession of Adam after his fall, and from his point of view it could not be called original" I.VI. 389.
- <sup>45</sup> Duffy 115.
- <sup>46</sup> Duffy 115. Duffy cites A. N. Whitehead's comment about Plato in this reference to Augustine.
- <sup>47</sup> Liddell and Scott 566.
- <sup>48</sup> Gleason 57-58.
- <sup>49</sup> Gleason 59-60.
- <sup>50</sup> Torrance 133.
- <sup>51</sup> See Torrance and his additional comment: "They were willing to give lip serve to them, but all unconsciously their preaching was shaped by the basically wrong categories of the natural mind, and their Christianity became in consequence greatly impoverished as a Gospel" 137.
- <sup>52</sup> Torrance 139
- <sup>53</sup> Torrance 140.
- <sup>54</sup> Torrance 141.
- <sup>55</sup> Richard P. McBrien, Catholicism, Revised (San Francisco: Harper, 1994) 169.
- <sup>56</sup> C. A. Patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1966) 198.
- <sup>57</sup> (Br V, 3, 1) quoted by George H. Tavard, From Bonaventure to the Reformers (Milwaukee: Marquette UP, 2005) 66.
- <sup>58</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, The Summa Theological, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Ed. Robert M. Hutchins Great Books of the Western World Vol. XX (Chicago: Britannica, 1952; originally New York: Benziger) I-II, Q 113, a. 8, 368.

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<sup>59</sup> George H. Tavard, From Bonaventure to the Reformers (Milwaukee: Marquette UP, 2005) 67-68.

<sup>60</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, “Grace,” Truth, trans. Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. Vol III (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994) 309-310. This text called in Latin De Veritate receives its scholastic citation as Q 27 a.1 and will be so designated herein. I include the page numbers for reader convenience.

In De Veritate Q 27 a.5 ad 6, Aquinas makes four distinctions between antecedent and subsequent grace or prevenient grace: according to the subject, antecedent grace justifies sinners, while subsequent grace helps the justified act correctly; according to the will, antecedent grace helps as a person wills or chooses correctly, while subsequent grace helps one perform the acts willed correctly; according to the act, antecedent grace measures all good acts, while subsequent grace gives perseverance in the pursuit of good deeds; according to spiritual growth, however, antecedent grace and subsequent grace are but “the same thing,” referring to merit and reward 342-343.

<sup>61</sup> De Veritate Q.27 a 5. (340).

<sup>62</sup> De Veritate Q.27 a 5 ad 1. (340-341).

<sup>63</sup> Duffy 161.

<sup>64</sup> See McBrien 176. McBrien’s commentary on grace in Catholicism gives a postmodern perspective to this history of grace.

<sup>65</sup> Aquinas, Summa Theologica I-2 Q 111. a. 3, (354).

<sup>66</sup> Patrides 198.



# Chapter IV

## The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Grace and Free Will Controversies

**Overview:** I first look at Arminianism as a heresy and controversy about grace within Calvinism and whose ideas some scholars hold Milton incorporates within PL and CD. Next, I address the grace controversy within the Catholic Church and summarize the De Auxiliis controversy in the Post Conciliar Period of Trent. I give John Milton's contribution to the grace deliberations and his understanding of grace articulated in PL with some help from his theological treatise, De Doctrina Christiana (CD).

### The Historical Situation

Historically two controversies about grace occur during the sixteenth century and continue into the seventeenth century. They both begin in the last decade of the sixteenth century, highlight the problems previous centuries bequeathed to the Church regarding grace, and indicate that the Reformation and Counter-Reformation had unresolved issues about free will and grace. The first controversy begins in 1691 within the Dutch Reformed Church when authorities ask Jacobus Arminius to examine and refute the errors of two Delft clergymen. Arminius, however, finds validity in their positions to incorporate them into his religious views which later bear his name. The Synod of Dort (1618-19) resolves these Arminian errors with strong support from the military and political forces within the Netherlands. Yet, the influence of Remonstrant theology continues throughout the century. The second disagreement, known as the De Auxiliis controversy, takes place in Italy from 2 January 1598 to 8 March 1607 and remains unsettled to this day within the Roman Catholic Church. Historically, Pope Paul V's

pontificate (1605-1621) occurs during the “conclusions” of both controversies. These two grace controversies draw attention to Post-Reformational philosophical and theological differences among theologians in both religious persuasions and indicate the necessity of resolving questions about the nature of grace, free will, and election by the use of reason and scripture that earlier generations failed to settle. Milton, heir to both controversies, enters the conversation on grace with PL and CD during the turbulent periods around the English Revolution, the Commonwealth, and the return of the monarchy. I contend that Milton enters these unfinished conversations about grace to give a decidedly English Protestant voice to the arguments thereby articulating a middle position between two controversies. Milton’s position ultimately reflects origins in the Patristic Fathers and St. Augustine.

### **The Arminian Controversy**

Orthodox Calvinism called a Synod to meet in Dort in November 1618-19 to handle the humanist position of Dutch reformed clergyman Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and his Remonstrant followers who favored religious toleration in a state controlled by strict Calvinists. So important was the Synod politically and theologically to both the Netherlands and England that James I sent six representatives to attend the Synod. The Arminian controversy challenged not only strict Calvinism but also the political organization of the Netherlands’ Seven United Provinces where Holland had more economic power and influence because of its wealthy cities.

The controversy moved outside the Church into politics when Jan Oldenbarneveldt, a member of the peace faction of Holland, who agreed with the Remonstrants, advocated greater autonomy for the provinces, and urged local rule for all the provinces,

clashed with Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange, the royal stadtholder, and leader of the war party. Maurice had led the Netherlands to independence from Spain; he wished to continue hostilities with Spain because it was good for Dutch economic interests. Oldenbarneveldt, advocating local autonomy for the provinces, challenged the principle of a central government for all the seven provinces dear to Maurice and the States General. Calling for a national synod to resolve the religious crisis between the strict and tolerant wings of the Reformed Church, Maurice faced opposition from the Remonstrants who held that a commanded synod violated the religious rights of the provinces. Angered, Maurice by force of arms ordered the provinces to hold a synod. The results of the synod were disastrous for the Remonstrants as the Synod of Dort maintained strict Calvinism, promulgated a Dutch Confession with predestination as a cornerstone, and condemned Arminians as heretics forcing them to leave the Reformed Church. After a court found Oldenbarneveldt guilty of dividing the country, they ordered him beheaded on May 13, 1619. What did the Dutch Remonstrants hold that could so divide a country, possibly dissolve its union, and execute a believer?

Arminius, once a student of Theodore Beza (1519-1605), assigned in 1591 to investigate and refute the teachings of two erring Delft clergymen, deviated instead from the position of Calvinism after study of the clergymen's position to advocate free will, reason, and piety rather than the predestinarianism of orthodox Calvinism.. As a professor of divinity at the University of Leyden in 1603, his views received more scrutiny. Arminius does not deny election but bases "it not on a divine arbitrary decree, but upon God's foreknowledge of man's merit."<sup>1</sup> In opposition to Calvinism's predestinarianism, Arminius held that man's will is free, that he earns salvation through

faith and good works, and that man cooperates with God in justification in “a cooperative venture between the human and the divine, not a deterministic decree from an autocratic God.”<sup>2</sup> Prior to Arminius, Calvinists divided along the process of election. “Did the decree of election or reprobation precede or follow the consideration of man as fallen?” If one were a supralapsarian such as Calvin or Beza, one holds that predestination to either heaven or hell occurs antecedent to God’s decree of the Fall. If one were an infralapsarian, one holds that in the decree of election God considers all mankind as fallen. Arminius and his followers criticized both the supralapsarian and infralapsarian positions.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, they called Calvinism to a more liberal interpretation of its strict theology.

After the sudden death of Arminius in 1609, his supporters named themselves Remonstrants<sup>4</sup> and supported five of his principles, the Five Arminian Articles, published in 1610 that the Synod of Dort later condemned. The five articles maintain that 1) a person’s free will accepts or rejects salvation—Arminius holds for a conditioned rather than unconditional election. 2) According to Article II, Remonstrants hold that Christ died for all men; Christ’s atonement is unlimited since “the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man so that he has obtained for all, by his death on the cross, reconciliation and remission of sins,” but that “no one is partaker of this remission except the believers.” 3) Arminius avoids Pelagianism in Article III, for he holds that “man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the working of his own free-will,” for “it is necessary that by God, in Christ, and through his Holy Spirit he be born again and renewed in understanding, affections and will and in all his faculties, that he may be able to understand, think, will and perform what is truly good.” In other words, the

Remonstrants reject man's absolute depravity but recognize a need for grace to activate his faculties. 4) A person has the potential to reject grace. Article IV holds that "grace is not irresistible" even though "grace is the beginning, the progress and the end of all good." Arminius and the Remonstrants hold that "even the regenerate man can neither think, will nor effect any good, nor withstand any temptation to evil, without grace precedent (or prevenient) awakening, following and co-operating." 5) A Christian is free to accept or reject salvation. "Those who are grafted into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby been made partakers of his life-giving Spirit, are abundantly endowed with power to strive against Satan . . . with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit . . . (provided only, that they are themselves prepared for the fight, that they entreat his aid and do not fail to help themselves)." <sup>5</sup> Although he also held that sufficient grace is given to everyone and that grace is resistible, Arminius was not a Pelagian but followed the teachings of St. Augustine. The Synod, rejecting the Remonstrant position, upheld a modified Calvinism or the infralapsarian position for the Reformed church, rejected supralapsarianism, and named Arminianism a heresy.

### **The De Auxiliis Controversy**

After the Council of Trent, Roman Catholic theologians addressed a dilemma, present within the concept of grace from the beginning, but which they never really tackled, between preserving the power of God to act on a person through grace and preserving a person's free will to accept or reject God's grace. In the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, problems about the nature of efficacious grace developed between two groups, the Dominicans and the Jesuits. Known today as the De Auxiliis controversy, the disagreement involved many forums—the Inquisition, Boards

of Hearings before Cardinals, and eventually arguments before two Popes, Clement VIII and Paul V—yet, the Popes, for one reason or another, never signed a decree condemning one position or supporting another. To situate the controversy within its historical context and to find a place within the conversation for Milton, I here give the pertinent facts of the disagreement as recounted in the 1930 January edition of The Dublin Review by Fr. Aelred Whitacre, O.P., who summarized nine years of hearings (2 January 1598 to 8 March 1607) by the “Congregatio De Auxiliis.”

During the last part of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth century, Jesuits and Dominicans debated the nature of efficacious grace and the “reconciliation of grace with human freedom.”<sup>6</sup> The Dominicans advocated a theory of divine premotion “whereby God determines man to determine himself freely to a supernatural act under the influence of efficacious grace.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, a person performs an act that has an “infallible” result, but at the time of action the person retains the power to dissent, to do the opposite, but chooses not to dissent at the moment of choosing to act. Grace for Dominicans is thus intrinsically efficacious. The Jesuits, following Luis De Molina, S.J. (1536-1600), hold a theory of Scientia Media whereby God knowing what a person “under any circumstances in which he might be placed would do,”<sup>8</sup> decrees a conditioned future according to the choice of the creature that God knows will accept one grace but reject another. Molinism has an inherent problem. When an action occurs is it the result of grace itself or the result of the person’s consent to the grace? The Spanish Inquisition first condemned the errors of Molinism contained in his Concordia. Additionally, two boards of Cardinals condemned it. A third examination took place in the presence of Pope Clement VIII (b.1536; papacy: 1592-

1605), but he died on 5 March before signing his condemnation. Paul V (b.1562; papacy: 1605-21) also heard a Board of Theologians condemn Molina's doctrine but deferred his proclamation when political problems arose with the Republic of Venice. When the Jesuits defended the rights of Rome in the Venice-Rome Controversy, thereby earning the respect of Paul V, a majority of the Council of Cardinals urged Paul V to defer a Bull specifying the official position of the Church. On 5 September 1607 Paul V in a decree permitted Dominicans and Jesuits "to defend their respective doctrines," urging them "to refrain from censuring the other's doctrine," and "to await the Papal decision."<sup>9</sup> Rome has never issued its statement.

Some would argue that even if Milton knew of the controversy within Catholicism, it does not necessarily follow that he would engage with it especially since he had such antipathy to Papists and Scholastic philosophy. Yet, Thomas Hartmann recognizes that "many sections of CD borrow their technical language and philosophical procedure directly from the Catholic tradition of Aquinas and Suarez in which Milton was trained at Cambridge" where the curriculum was "heavily scholastic."<sup>10</sup> Milton, then, was not ignorant of the tradition that he opposes. By the time Milton writes his epic where, according to Hartmann, he "brought the conventional epic debate to its full perfection,"<sup>11</sup> he has disputed with England's hierarchy over Anglican Church policy and defended the Commonwealth against world powers as secretary for Cromwell. Scholars agree Milton abhorred Papists, but they agree he knew their tradition. For a time he also hated the Arminians; but he later modified his position. Therefore, when the Restoration occurs, a situation Milton tries to prevent, he proceeds in a direction he does not like. With rumors of political and sexual intrigue at the Court, with the return of the

Established Church, with the Uniformity Act of 1662 that suppresses dissent by requiring all ministers to follow Anglican doctrine as prescribed in The Book of Common Prayer, and with the suspected Catholicism of Charles II<sup>12</sup> and his openly Catholic wife, Catherine of Braganza, with her own court chaplain, would Milton have hesitated to visit a topic so theologically ripe with controversy? Most likely not since Milton honed his rhetorical skills on controversy, was a master in coding his material so that it passed censorship, and had schooled himself in matters of theology. Grace, however, is an ecumenical topic that every religious persuasion may interpret with shades of complexity, but all agree grace is of God. Since Rome, unlike the synod of Dort, issued no proclamation about grace during John Milton's lifetime, I suggest that Milton, astute witness of political and religious events in England and Europe especially the Netherlands, through PL enters the conversations on grace to give a Post-Reformation voice to two major grace controversies of the century through the discourses of God the Father with the Son in Book III. I contend also that the "higher Argument" Milton mentions in the Proem to Book IX indicates the doctrinal direction he wishes to take for the reader of his epic.

Thus far, I have found no evidence that Milton knew of this controversy. But his time in Rome, his knowledge of Paolo Sarpi whom he called "the great Venetian antagonist of the Pope,"<sup>13</sup> his use of Sarpi's History of the Council of Trent (1619), his probable awareness of Sarpi's controversies with the Jesuits after the Servite friar became theologian and canonist to the Republic of Venice on 28 January 1606, and Sarpi's difficulties when Paul V placed Venice under interdict in April 1606<sup>14</sup> lead me to speculate that Milton may have heard something about grace issues during his stay in



Italy (1638), especially since the Synod of Dort had occurred only twenty years before. Milton's knowledge of the Catholic controversy is a working hypothesis based on his English and Italian connections, his respect for Paolo Sarpi, and his awareness of most things political-religious. Interestingly, Sarpi claims among his friends the ambassador of James I to Venice,<sup>15</sup> Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639), and the king's Chaplain William Bedell who both advance the publication of Sarpi's The Council of Trent. Giovanni Diodati (1576-1649), uncle to Milton's friend, Charles Diodati, translated Sarpi's work into French. While returning to England from his Continental journey, Milton stops to visit Diodati, a Professor of Hebrew and theology in Geneva in 1639, where he easily could have discussed Sarpi and learned of the grace debate. Interesting, as well, is that Milton lives at Horton but five miles from Eton where Wotton serves as Provost. Milton visits him at Eton before his Continental trip. Wotton advises him, in a letter written after the visit, about his itinerary, warns him about dangers of travel, and gives him a letter of introduction to the tutor to the son of John Viscount Scudamore. Possibly with Milton's respect for Sarpi and Wotton's knowledge of and friendship with the friar, he would have been a topic of conversation and a promising link to the grace issue. Additionally, Milton carries letters from England to John Scudamore who before Milton continues his tour introduces him to Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the most famous of Arminians who had suffered imprisonment after the Synod of Dort. Later, when Milton lives in Petty France John Scudamore is a neighbor.

Besides his personal connections, Milton's familiarity with the works of the Reformers that he references in CD, the sermons of William Perkins that he would have heard about at Cambridge, and the theological treatise of William Ames, The Marrow of

Christian Divinity published in 1629, whom Milton, according to his nephew, Edward Phillips, recognizes as one of “the ablest of divines”<sup>16</sup> would have alerted Milton to Reformed interpretations of grace and some awareness about the Catholic controversy even before his trip to the Continent. Certainly, Milton could not resist dipping into the controversial subject if he knew of it. I suggest that the issue was too contentious a topic among Italian theologians for Milton not to have heard something about it. Since the Synod of Dort silenced the Arminians, the controversy became a double challenge.

### **John Milton: A Post-Reformational Voice in the Grace Controversy**

By the time Milton composes PL, Rome had issued no decision on the grace controversy, but the Synod of Dort had rendered Arminianism heretical, a position no orthodox Calvinist could hold. Yet, earlier in the century many in England suspected Archbishop Laud and others of Remonstrant beliefs. Generally, Milton scholars have noted a similarity between Arminian beliefs and ideas Milton expresses in PL and CD. Maurice Kelley argues that “Paradise Lost expresses the Arminian dogma of the De doctrina rather than the orthodox Calvinism found in the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce” (1643).<sup>17</sup> Dennis Danielson holds that Arminian “is not on the whole a controversial claim” to advance “for Milton’s later theology.”<sup>18</sup> John Steadman places the possibility of Arminianism in both CD and PL in its historical context within Calvinist argumentation as he considers Milton’s understanding of the divine decrees—creation, generation (of the Son), and providence (government of the world). Steadman believes Milton treats of these divine realities as a matter of Divine efficiency (what I call as the divine economy). When Milton asserts God’s and mankind’s freedom, Steadman

notes “Milton’s doctrine of the divine decrees represents a modification of Calvinism and a rapprochement with Arminianism.” However, as Steadman observes:

in declaring that God’s own will was free and not bound by necessity, and in insisting that divine foreknowledge rendered Adam’s fall certain but not necessary, Milton was affirming doctrines that would have been acceptable to perhaps the majority of Calvinist as well as Arminian divines. On the other hand, in asserting the conditional character of the decree of election, in denying that reprobation formed an integral part of predestination, in allowing fallen man a limited degree of freedom after the fall, and in arguing that a necessitarian or deterministic view of the divine decrees tended to make the Deity the ‘author of sin,’ he advanced views that many Calvinists would have regarded as an Arminian heresy.<sup>19</sup>

Steadman sees PL as Milton’s poetic manifestation of his understanding of divine decrees and the decrees in CD as his independent theological position that strict Calvinism could challenge. But does this make Milton an Arminian, or does it indicate his original foundation in St. Augustine?

John Shawcross believes that Milton continues to conform to the Westminster Confession of 1647 when scholars believe he was turning to Arminianism. Shawcross argues: “The point is that Milton’s thinking agreed with certain ideas set forth by Arminius and accepted by others, but did not agree with other ideas. To call Milton an Arminian is thus invalid, despite agreement with certain ideas.” Moreover, Shawcross holds that “there is no evidence that Milton changed his ideas . . . whether around 1644 or during the late 1650s.” Indeed, Shawcross challenges Maurice Kelley on his statement that “Milton’s second doctrinal errancy is Arminianism,” a statement Kelley makes in his opening paragraph to the chapter on Arminianism in the Yale CD.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Dennis Danielson in “Milton’s Arminianism and Paradise Lost” writes that “there is no doubt that the term [Arminian] can be applied meaningfully, especially in his later writings ” Shawcross responds: “I cannot agree that Milton reversed his theological

position and ‘was himself arguing an Arminian position against what he had previously accepted as the truth. This truth had been set down in 1647 in the Westminster Confession.’” Shawcross continues: “This attitude is based on seeing Milton’s earlier critical remarks on Arminians as espousing ‘the truth’ and his later statements in De doctrina christiana as espousing Arminianism, rather than viewing his position as basically consistent and independent.” Further in his note, Shawcross writes:

In a recent unpublished paper in which he argues that ‘Calvinism and Arminianism . . . came to mean something different in Milton’s later years, Danielson suggests that Milton’s views did not change so much as expand and ‘that the theological opinions Milton set forth in Christian Doctrine and in Paradise Lost concerning election, predestination, grace, and free will are Arminian in the doctrinal sense of that term.’ With this position I have no disagreement.<sup>21</sup>

As convenient as it is to assign the heretical views of Arminianism to Milton, Shawcross believes that even though the possibility of an influence of Arminius on Milton exists, it is “time we stopped calling Milton an Arminian and acknowledge instead his agreement with only certain Arminian ideas.” Scholars are “not allowing for the possibility that the ideas are independent and resultant from thinking about such issues, provoked by the writing of various people—Perkins, Wollebius, Ames, Episcopius, et al.”<sup>22</sup> Holding the insight and scholarship of John Shawcross seriously, I find St. Augustine a more valid influence not only for Milton but for the divines Shawcross mentions.

Peter Fiore tells us that in the sixteenth and seventeenth century the ideas of Augustine flourish from the pulpits and among humanists, philosophers, and theologians of England. The respect for the authority of Augustine among the Reformers and Puritans permeates sermons and pamphlets even though they hold that Scripture is their only authority. Fiore reminds us that even though the three elements of Reformed

worship “were the primacy of scripture, the proclamation of the word of God, and conversion through rigorous discipline,” clergymen of any denomination “did not hesitate to search the works of Augustine for sermon material.”<sup>23</sup> Augustine’s influence among adversaries underscores their common tradition in the Fathers of the Early Church.

Milton himself learned of Augustine from his tutor Thomas Young known for his interest in Patristics. Peter Fiore asserts that “we can be certain that the boy was exposed to the most prolific of all the Church Fathers in the original Latin at a relatively early age,” and that John Colet, Dean of St Paul’s where Milton studied, “insisted that the Fathers of the early Christian era be studied.” Fiore notes that Milton in his Elegia Quarta expresses the esteem he “has for the Church Fathers as well as for the Scriptures.”<sup>24</sup> Hearing of Augustine from pulpit and classes, Milton absorbs Augustine’s ideas and values; they shape his philosophy and theology so that he cites Augustine over forty-five times in his prose works according to Fiore.<sup>25</sup> Augustine, then, offers Milton his theology for PL in terms of the Fall of Man and the economy of the redemptive plan. Even Kelley agrees that Milton gathers “his materials from the works of the Fathers and the theologians, and then to have given them poetic utterance in Paradise Lost” while some ideas that Milton does not include in CD “passed directly from the theologians to the epic.”<sup>26</sup> Scholarly opinion accepts a strong Augustinian influence on Milton.

The plan of salvation in PL accords with St. Augustine’s position, according to Fiore, in terms of the ransom of all men from Satan and the sacrifice of Christ for all humanity. Despite Milton’s notion of the subordination of the Son to the Father, his understanding of Christ’s humanity, Incarnation, and Redemption follows that of St Augustine and orthodox Christianity.

Man (Adam) is at the center of the epic. Paradise Lost and this tradition in no way ignore the dignity and glorification of Christ. The epic takes these for granted and then goes on to recognize the great and immense value of man in God's economy. Certainly without the Fall of Man, Christ would be the King of Creation; and, in a sense, it would be perfect for him to have this title in a sinless order. But the whole economy of salvation, which is recounted for us in Scripture and tradition and which is the primary concern of Paradise Lost, does not pertain to a sinless order. It pertains to a present order which has as its central concern the whole of fallen mankind.<sup>27</sup>

C.A. Patrides observes that we may justifiably maintain that his [Milton's] attitude toward grace and nature, though post-Augustinian, is largely Augustinian in emphasis."<sup>28</sup> Readers of Milton should note that since the time of Augustine an understanding of grace develops out of controversies about free will.

PL depicts in poetic narrative the present economy of salvation by reason of the Fall and Redemption by the Son where the promise of His Incarnation and Redemption occurs in the dialogue between Father and Son who play out their roles of Justice and Mercy (III). Additionally, in CD Milton uses telling phrases from Scripture to indicate Christ has paid a "PRICE ON BEHALF" of man or "a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28), and that "you are bought with a price" (I Cor. vi. 20). These Miltonic proof texts "signify the substitution of one person for another."<sup>29</sup> According to Fiore, for St. Augustine and the Fathers, Christ's Redemption of all mankind "represents some kind of transaction or deception of and conquest over the devil." St. Anselm criticizes this theory, but it was "held by Augustine, received dogmatic status in the Calvinist churches, and had been assumed by most Protestants and Catholics up to the time of Milton." This position teaches that since Satan causes mankind to sin, he thereby possesses "a right of possession" over humanity. Christ, who is sinless, not only has to overcome Satan but has to ransom humanity from Satan. Christ's human nature functions, as Fiore explains,

“like the bait in a mousetrap (*esca in muscipula*)” that “highlight two important parallels: there is a deliverance from captivity, and it takes place according to the standards of justice or right governing the relationship between two parties.” When Satan oversteps boundaries in a relationship, “exercises his rights in an improper way,” he loses his rights to humanity.<sup>30</sup> As Milton teaches in CD, Christ’s sacrificial work occurs “ON BEHALF OF ALL MEN (Rom v. 18), a position held by St. Augustine and the Church Fathers, not for just a certain select elect. The economy of salvation that Milton presents comes from Sacred Scripture, Augustine, and the Church Fathers.

I suggest that Milton contributes to the Calvinist and Catholic discussion about grace by introducing his Protestant understanding of grace influenced by St. Augustine’s position more so than the Arminian position which also traces its origins to St. Augustine. In suggesting that Augustine is the source of Milton’s theology rather than Arminius, I argue for a decidedly Patristic tone to the dialogue between the Father and the Son and return the debate to Augustine’s position on grace prior to what occurs with the De Auxilis affair, which also traces its problems to St. Augustine. God the Father articulates Milton’s position on grace in his monologue in Book III, in the response of the Son to the Father, and in the verbal and non-verbal actions of Adam and Eve in the last four books of the epic. Milton does not forget what sin and grace mean to his reader who first relives the sin of Eve and then of Adam, as Stanley Fish successfully argues, and then secondly experiences the effect of grace that our first parents receive by the consolation of the Spirit that comes with their humility, repentance, and contrition.

John Milton’s discussion of grace in PL with the Father’s homily in Book III establishes the primacy of grace in the divine economy and within the redemption plan

for all mankind. Milton has the Father in Book III render a mini-treatise on grace for the benefit of loyal angels and his Son. Milton situates the treatise in lines 173-216 between the Father's encompassing vision of his created happy couple "in blissful solitude" in their enclosed garden and his vision of their angry adversary winging his way to "pervert" them with "glozing lies" (3.66-93) and by the Son's generous response to the Father's request for a "mortal to redeem / Man's mortal crime" (3.214-215). With the Father's words, the reader first encounters grace in its theological sense when the Father informs his Son of the misuse of free will by his angelic creation.<sup>31</sup> The abuse of free will by Satan and some of the angels has the Father speak in defense of his creative act" in which "I made him (Satan) just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (3.98-99). Again a second time: "I formed them free, and free they must remain, / Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change / Thir nature, and revoke the high Decree / Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordained their fall" (3.124-128). In addition, the Father explains that the rebellious angels "by thir own suggestion fell, / self-tempted, self-depraved: Man falls deceiv'd / By the other first: Man therefore shall find grace / the other none . . ." (3.129-131). Immediately after this passage, Milton describes the Son's face as suffused with "Divine compassion," who is "Love without end and without measure Grace" (3.140-142) addressing the dilemma that if man should fall by "fraud" and "folly," how can he thus "find grace" (3.145-153)? The Father reassures the Son that "Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will, / Yet not of will in him but grace in me" since the Father through grace will vivify man's "lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthralled / By sin to foul exorbitant desires (3.173-177); with grace "once more" will man "stand"<sup>32</sup> / On even ground against his mortal foe" (3.178-179), but this time man



will know how frail he is, and that he owes his “deliverance” (3.182) to God and not himself. The Father expands his thought saying, “Some I have chosen of peculiar grace / Elect above the rest; so is my will: / The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warn’d . . . while offer’d grace Invites; for I will clear thir senses dark. . . . and soft’n stony hearts / To Prayer, repentance, and obedience due. . . .” (3.183-191). Thus, in His homily the Father names sufficient grace and describes prevenient grace.<sup>33</sup> Within the dialogue between Father and Son, the reader receives an exposition of grace in the context of the Son’s redemptive action that becomes clearer after the disobedience in Book IX and by the Father’s reaction to that disobedience in Book X and XI.

Over the centuries, sufficient grace has received much analysis from theologians. The term sufficient grace comes from St. Paul’s experience with temptation and with the response he receives: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 9). Duffy observes that Augustine held that Adam possessed sufficient grace “in the state of original justice” which “enabled him to freely exercise virtue and to persevere in it.”<sup>34</sup> Merritt Hughes, in a note on the Father’s use of “Sufficient,” corroborates this view: “In the word Sufficient Sister Mary Corcoran points out an allusion to the doctrine of sufficient grace, by which theologians of all communions held that Adam was supported before his fall.”<sup>35</sup> McBrien, reflecting on The Modern Period and the many classifications of grace that occur by that time, understands sufficient grace as a subdivision of actual grace as are other graces such as elevating, healing, operating, and cooperating graces. He states that sufficient grace is “in principle necessary” for salvation, while efficacious grace “insures ultimate salvation.” However, in granting sufficient grace to all mankind, “God wills the salvation

of all. But God gives only some persons “efficacious grace, insuring their salvation.” Unfortunately, according to that position, sufficient grace does “not confer eternal life; only efficacious grace” does that.<sup>36</sup> The reader recalls “Who has known the mind of God?” One wonders how God looks upon these theological interpretations, distinctions, and classifications of the gift of grace and reflects on the wisdom that Rome issued no official definition with its controversy.

After his homily, the Father asks for volunteers among his angelic congregation. None respond except the Son whose reply embraces the Redemption of mankind: “Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life / I offer, on mee let thy anger fall;” (3.236-237). Man will indeed “find grace” (3.227) because “to death I yield, and am his due / All that of me can die” to have man’s “debt paid” (3.245-246) and to bind “the powers of darkness” (3.256). The father accepts his selfless Volunteer and foresees his embodiment in the Incarnation. “And be thyself Man among men on Earth / Thir nature also to thy Nature join . . . Be thou in Adam’s room / The Head of all mankind, though Adam’s son” (3.283-286). Thus, in the space of a little over two hundred and fifty lines, the Father and Son discuss and manifest the theological implications of grace, free will, sin, conscience, salvation, justice, charity, obedience, and the reality of a divine Incarnation and Redemption that the rest of the epic dramatically enacts for Milton’s reader. The dialogue of the Creator with his creation has begun, foreshadowed in the Divine conversation of Book III.

By the end of Book X, Adam and Eve, mankind’s “Grand Parents” (1. 29), have exercised free will, violated obedience through sin, lost original innocence, rationalized their consciences, and betrayed one another. After angry, mean recriminations between

the couple, Eve falls humbly to Adam's feet beseeching peace; in Hellenic form as Thetis grasps the knees of Zeus, Eve clasps Adam's knees confessing that she has sinned "against God and thee, / And to the place of judgment will return" (10.931-2). Her double use of "mee mee only" (10.937) recalls the Son's "Account mee man" of Book III (239). Adam agrees to Eve's idea of returning to their judgment place, and he suggests that they "prostrate fall / Before him reverent, and there confess / Humbly our faults, and pardon beg" (10.1087-1088). In their misery, with "hearts contrite," they experience "humiliation meek" (10.1091-1092). Remembering the "favor, grace, and mercy" that the "serene" but "severe" (10.1094-1096) face of their Judge betrayed, they turn to that judgment seat confessing their sin and begging pardon.

The opening lines of Book XI present the effects of grace, specifically prevenient grace, for Adam and Eve. Jackson Campbell Boswell asserts that Milton believes in prevenient grace, a term he receives from St Augustine who "coined the phrase 'prevenient grace.'"<sup>37</sup> Grace removes the "stony from thir hearts, and made new flesh / Regenerate grow instead" (11.4-5),<sup>38</sup> while the Son presents their prayers covered with incense in a Golden Censer begging mercy as their Advocate to the Father (11.33).

Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood  
Praying, for from the Mercy-seat above  
Prevenient Grace descending had removed  
The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh  
Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breath'd  
Unutterable, which the Spirit of prayer  
Inspir'd, and wing'd for heaven with speedier flight  
Than loudest Oratory: (11.1-8).

Patrides believes that "we should refrain from close analysis of this passage, if indeed it is capable of analysis, since, apart from asserting the primacy of grace, it remains imprecise, for example, about the role of prayer. Yet its very imprecision is highly

appropriate, for grace is no philosophical tenet to be dissected but an experience to be lived.”<sup>39</sup>

Reformers and Puritans knew of prevenient grace or antecedent grace, a grace given prior to conversion, because Augustine in his Confessions sees every event of life as grace-filled leading him to the Divine; anything that assists in turning the heart to God he considers prevenient grace. “Every movement of his heart, every initiative of his will is preceded by God who calls and sustains his holy restlessness.”<sup>40</sup> Augustine, after much thought, divides the work of the Holy Spirit into phases that affect the soul. For example, prevenient grace (antecedent grace) finds a Scriptural verification in Ps. 59:10: “My God in his steadfast love will meet me,” and prevenient grace occurs when God initiates the will to think, desire, or will a good. With cooperating grace [my emphasis], God “co-operates with the awakened will.”<sup>41</sup> Adam possesses sufficient grace [my emphasis] in his original state that enables him to “exercise virtue and persevere in it.” By efficient grace [my emphasis], the predestined, the elect in Puritan terminology, both will and “accomplish the good God decrees for them.” Duffy notes that “the crucial point behind this refined classification is that without grace, one is religiously impotent.”<sup>42</sup> Later scholastics including Thomas Aquinas distinguish prevenient grace from subsequent grace which God gives after conversion; they understand prevenient grace as the grace given by God preceding further action. According to Duffy “the distinction between grace as prevenient and subsequent, operative and cooperative is considered notional, not real. Grace produces in the soul a multiplicity of effects; this does not, however, necessitate the assertion of a multiplicity of graces.”<sup>43</sup> Significantly, Boswell adds that Milton “made little distinction” between the various types of grace” noted by

saints and scholars. Thus, Milton appears a conservative in terms of grace and remains within the Augustinian, Scholastic, and Reformed traditions with his use of prevenient grace.

In light of the De Auxiliis controversy it is significant that Milton names the grace “prevenient,” a term used by Augustine, and not “efficacious.” He avoids a theological pitfall of trying to define how much an act is God’s and how much is attributable to man. In so doing, he speaks to a reality with which his readers can identify, for, grace is an experience, as Patrides notes above, not an argument or controversy. Milton’s voice in the discussion is thus a dramatic but rational one. As Book X closes, Adam and Eve return to the place of judgment most contrite, prayerful, and

prostrate fell  
Before him reverent, and both confess’d  
Humbly their faults, and pardon begg’d, with tears  
Watering the ground, and with thir sighs the Air  
Frequenting, sent forth from hearts contrite, in sign  
Of sorrow unfeign’d, and humiliation meek (10.1099-1104).

Milton does not analyze the process of grace. He describes the condition of their spirits, the action of Divine Mercy, and the effects of grace on Adam and Eve.

In fact, Milton sidesteps the argumentative nature of the De Auxiliis controversy by indicating the efficacy of the grace Adam and Eve receive in Book XI, by the grace and instruction of Adam’s dream vision, and in the restorative sleep of Eve in Book XII that reveal the Protevangelium to them. While Eve rests, Adam learns from Michael that he will have a descendent of Abraham who, Proclaiming Life to all who shall believe (12. 415), will also bring a “Comforter” who “shall dwell / His Spirit” within the faithful “Working through love, upon thir hearts shall write, / to guide them in all truth” (XII. 486-490), but hated and despised by “his own Nation, slain for bringing Life” (12. 414),

he dies for all mankind, but “this act shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength / Defeating Sin and Death” (12.429-431). Eve receives another type of divine experience while Adam learns the effects of sin from Michael. Eve tells Adam when he returns to the Bower before their departure from Paradise:

God is also in sleep, and Dreams advise,  
Which he has sent propitious, some great good  
Presaging, since with sorrow and heart's distress  
Wearied I fell asleep: but now lead on;  
In mee is no delay; with thee to go,  
Is to stay here; without thee here to stay.  
Is to go hence unwilling . . . .  
This further consolation yet secure  
I carry hence; though all by mee is lost,  
Such favor I unworthy am voutsaf't,  
By mee the Promised Seed shall all restore (12.611-623).

Not only has sleep renewed Eve's spirit, but she has discovered her “paradise within” (12.587). [Note Eve's use of mee.] Moreover, with her final speech in PL, Eve reveals that she glimpses some of the meaning of the Protevangelium pronounced in Genesis 3:15, developed by Milton in PL 10.81, and expanded upon in the rest of the epic. Her final word returns the reader to the “one greater Man” (1.4) of Book One who will “restore us,” in whom grace will abound.

According to Peter Fiore in his comparison between patterns of thought in Milton and Augustine, Milton gives “many different meanings” to grace in his epic. Even in CD he does not expand upon the concept of grace in any systematic manner “with any authority” as he generally does with other theological issues. Fiore does remark that “Milton's closest statement to the traditional Augustinian concept of grace is found in Christian Doctrine, when he speaks of the second degree of death, which is called Spiritual Death.”<sup>44</sup> Right after chapter XI devoted to the fall and sin of our first parents,

Milton treats of spiritual death, which occurs “at the same moment as the fall,” when mankind loses “that divine grace and innate righteousness by which, in the beginning man lived with God . . . .”<sup>45</sup> Fiore draws the conclusion that “Milton in calling loss of grace ‘spiritual death’ is implying that grace is a superior kind of life, a habitual state or quality which Augustine taught.” However, because Milton uses different “connotative meanings” and had no “delineated” doctrine, Fiore concludes that Milton possessed an “eclectic concept “of grace.”<sup>46</sup> Taking a middle ground between the two grace controversies by following Augustine would be logical then for Milton.

Sir Herbert Grierson in addressing Milton’s understanding of prevenient grace asserts that Milton’s “scale of values is not that of the orthodox and sincere Christian, Evangelical or Catholic.” Why is this so for Grierson? Milton had observed “emotional religion and come to believe that it was a source of weakness as well as of strength, made for a self-centered regard for personal salvation rather than such a reform of Church and State as he longed for.” This attitude affects his management of the doctrine of grace:

In his treatment of the doctrine of God’s prevenient grace there seems to me to be the same difference between his express recognition of the doctrine and the value which he attaches to it. To recover the full freedom forfeited by the Fall man needs the grace of God . . . . But as a fact he seems to lay small stress on grace as communicated directly or through the mediation of sacraments. Man’s will is free, and on himself it depends whether tempted he falls like Adam, or overcomes every temptation like Christ, or falling repents and sincerely repenting recovers his freedom like Samson. Man is free and thereby responsible for what happens to him in this world and the next—that is the whole burden of the final message in these closing poems. It is the note that runs throughout the *De Doctrina*.<sup>47</sup>

In his epistle to CD, Milton perhaps offers a reason for not covering grace in a formal manner as did Augustine and Aquinas. In accepting only “God’s self-revelation” in Sacred Scripture, he says he had “to puzzle out a religious creed for myself” because “I

could not properly entrust either my creed or my hope of salvation” to theological “guides” who “evaded an opponent’s point in a dishonest way or countered it in appearance rather than in reality, by an affected display of logical ingenuity or by constant linguistic quibbles.”<sup>48</sup> Puzzling out the nature of grace places man in the position of trying to know the mind of God in his largesse, but one also comes to understand that God desires a relationship with His creatures. Milton certainly knows the various distinctions for grace as he uses prevenient grace correctly, but he treats grace poetically, dramatically, and realistically as he does with his divine and human characters in PL. Grace speaks to him and to his readers as a phenomenal experience of the transcendent entering their lives.

Milton believes in grace and free will. A. C. Labriola observes “in fact, all of Milton’s writings argue in behalf of the importance of Grace: both poetry and prose.”<sup>49</sup> Patrides holds De Doctrina Christiana “is within the Pauline-Augustine tradition, since it asserts that grace is God’s gift, and man’s restoration the work ‘purely of grace.’”<sup>50</sup> Patrides teaches as well that “the outpouring of God’s grace described in Paradise Lost is analogous to the act of creation when the divine goodness was put forth over chaos” (7.171).<sup>51</sup> Milton writes of both grace and free will in CD in “Of The Punishment of Sin” where he links free will and grace: “As a vindication of God’s justice, especially when he calls man, it is obviously fitting that some measure of free will should be allowed to man, whether this is something left over from his primitive state, or something restored to him as a result of the call of grace. It is also fitting that this will should operate in good works or least good attempts . . .” (1.XII.397).<sup>52</sup> Because “men have freedom of action” (I. III.155) and the “object of the divine plan [my emphasis] was that angels and men alike



should be endowed with free will, so that they could either fall or not fall” (III.163), Milton in PL has the Father promise a “day of grace” (3.198) to those who listen to “Umpire Conscience” (3.195), for he excludes none from his mercy except “they who neglect and scorn, shall never taste; / But hard be hard’n’d, blind, be blinded more / That they may stumble one, and deeper fall.” (3.199-202).<sup>53</sup> C. S. Lewis makes the point that “In so far as Paradise Lost is Augustinian and Hierarchical it is also Catholic in the sense of basing its poetry on conceptions that have been held ‘always and everywhere and by all.’ This catholic quality is so predominant that it is the first impression any unbiased reader would receive.”<sup>54</sup> Therefore, as an indeterminate epic, PL speaks in a voice that resonates for all mankind.

Although Milton places himself among Reformation theologians in CD with his introductory address to all Churches and to all Christians worldwide, Milton neither has a treatise on grace as Thomas Aquinas does nor do historians refer to Milton with epithets about grace as they refer to Augustine. Yet, Milton deserves a place among the learned expositors of grace. In PL the reader meets the reality of grace in the instruction and mercy of the Father, the obedience of the Son, the forgiveness of Adam and Eve, and the Just persons of Scriptural history. PL is Milton’s poetics of grace. Milton is the Reformational Poet of Grace giving readers across the centuries and the continents an experience of the effects of the merciful love of God shared with his creation. Milton’s “higher Argument” of an economics of salvation and grace develops gradually in the epic from the “one greater man” of Proem I, through the sermonic instruction of Michael and Raphael, in the actions of Adam and Eve, to the Redeemer of Book XII, and ends with the reaction of the fit reader who discovers the sacred and holy embedded in an epic.

I believe that Milton with his Post-Reformation position enters the controversial debates about the nature of grace to be an English Protestant albeit Augustinian voice in a topic of great mystery. I also assert that his primary interest in PL is to touch the minds and hearts of his “fit audience.” Grace is of concern in the epic both for doctrinal reasons and also for a reader’s understanding of the Incarnation, Redemption, and the paradox of the fortunate fall that Milton’s Adam articulates (XII 469-478) as an echo of St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Christian tradition.<sup>55</sup> A reader’s awareness of the mystery of grace whereby “good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good” (XII.470-471) emerges from PL preparing a person for a relationship with the Creator.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Henry Bettenson, ed. "Introduction," Documents of the Christian Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford P, 1967) 268.

<sup>2</sup> De Lamar Jensen, Reformation Europe: Age of Reform and Revolution 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1992) 442.

<sup>3</sup> See John M. Steadman, "Divine Decree," A Milton Encyclopedia, 9 vols. William B. Hunter, gen. ed. (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1978) 2:125-135, especially, 2:130.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Internet (Wikipedia) as of 2005 the Netherlands has 47 congregations of Remonstrants and one congregation in Germany. The Remonstrants received official recognition as a Church in 1795 with Episcopius the author of its Confession written in 1621. Generally, Remonstrants hold a liberal interpretation of theology. Tension still exists between Remonstrants and the Dutch Reformed Church who have not recognized them.

<sup>5</sup> "The Five Articles of the Remonstrants," Documents of the Christian Church, 268-9.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Aelred Whitacre, O.P., "The Congregatio De Auxiliis," Dublin Review, No. 372 January, 1939, 73.

<sup>7</sup> Whitacre 74.

<sup>8</sup> Whitacre 74.

<sup>9</sup> Whitacre 83.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas R. Hartmann, "Debate," A Milton Encyclopedia, 2:124a, 123a.

<sup>11</sup> Hartmann 2: 121a.

<sup>12</sup> See The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975). In the overview of the Restoration Period, M. H. Abrams notes that Charles II "was content to avoid crises whenever he could, and since he was an astute politician, he frequently could. He concealed from his subjects his Catholic sympathies (on his deathbed he received the last rites of the Church), for he had no wish 'to go on his travels' again" 841.

See also James Anderson Winn, John Dryden and His World (New Haven: Yale UP 1987) 201. The history of the Secret Treaty of Dover signed in December 1670 between Charles II and Louis XIV reveals that Charles wanted conditions for Catholics to improve and included a promise, officially omitted from the formal treaty, that Charles II would reveal his Catholicism to his subjects.

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<sup>13</sup> John Milton, Of Reformation (1641), Preface and Notes by Dom M. Wolfe and William Alfred John Milton, in The Complete Prose Works of John Milton, ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-82) I: 581.

<sup>14</sup> Interdict of 1606-1607. See Peter Burke, "Introduction," Sarpi: History of Benefices and Selections from History of the Council of Trent (New York: Washington Square P, 1967). "The clash between Church and state was a clash over two issues. One was that of 'criminous' clerks—that is clergy who has broken the laws of the state. The other was that of ecclesiastical mortmain, or the accumulation of inalienable property in the hands of the Church. The 'clerks' had been imprisoned by the Venetian government; two laws prohibiting the donation or bequest of property to Church had been passed by the Venetian Senate." Paul V "ordered the clerks to be handed over and the laws repealed. The senate would do neither. The Pope laid an interdict on Venice. The Senate forbade the clergy to observe it" xii.

See also YP, Commonplace Book, Notes about Paolo Sarpi and his History of the Council of Trent by Ruth Mohl: "He never acknowledged his authorship. Born in Venice in 1552, Sarpi became one of the leading religious reformers of his time. Having become a man of learning, he was court theologian at Mantua, professor of philosophy in a convent of his order, and a defender of Venice in its dispute with Paul V. Sarpi published a tract attacking papal authority in temporal matters, which was put on the Index of Prohibited Books. Numerous other pamphlets followed, and his life was endangered by would-be assassins. He planned to find refuge in England, but lived peacefully in a cloister of his order until his death in 1623. He was a religious reformer at heart, but his first loyalties were to Venice. Milton used Sarpi for the second edition of the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, published before 1644, but not for the first, published before August I, 1643, a fact which helps to date Milton's reading of Sarpi" I: 396.

See also Note 14 in YP Commonplace Book. Milton has thirteen references to the history of the Council of Trent. He uses Sarpi's Italian edition of Historia del Concilio Tridentino published in London in 1619. I. 396.

See also A. C. Labriola, "Paolo Sarpi," A Milton Encyclopedia, 7:165a-166a.

<sup>15</sup> See John T. Shawcross, "Wotton, Sir Henry," A Milton Encyclopedia, 8:182b where JTS notes that under James I Wotton became ambassador to Venice and remained in that position until 1624, a time long enough for Sarpi to have known him.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Phillips. The Life of Milton (1694) in Paradise Lost, ed. Merritt Y Hughes (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 2003) 315.

<sup>17</sup> Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana as a Gloss upon Paradise Lost (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1962) 19.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis R. Danielson, Milton's Good God (New York: Cambridge UP, 1982) 59.

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<sup>19</sup> John T. Steadman, "Divine Decrees," A Milton Encyclopedia, 129 b-130 a. Steadman notes Milton's "theory of contingent decrees" (126a) whose use and explanation, although interesting, lie outside the scope of this chapter.

<sup>20</sup> John Shawcross, John Milton: The Self and the World (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1993), 139.

<sup>21</sup> Shawcross, Milton note 37, 320-321.

<sup>22</sup> Shawcross, Milton 139-140. See James Dale, "Arminianism," in A Milton Encyclopedia where Dale mentions Simon Episcopus (1583-1642) who assumed leadership after the death of Arminius I: 84 a. See also Shawcross in Milton where Shawcross notes that Dale "falls into the trap" of making Milton, CD, and PL Arminian 140.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Fiore, Milton and Augustine (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1981) 5.

<sup>24</sup> Fiore, Milton and Augustine 2.

<sup>25</sup> Fiore, "St. Augustine," A Milton Encyclopedia 1:115a.

<sup>26</sup> Kelley 204.

<sup>27</sup> Fiore, Milton and Augustine 69.

<sup>28</sup> C. A. Patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1966) 216.

<sup>29</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI. XVI. 444.

<sup>30</sup> Fiore 79-80.

<sup>31</sup> Milton uses the word grace in various senses until he arrives at Book III where Father and Son speak of grace in traditional terms. In Book I he has Satan use the term grace "to bow and sue for grace / with suppliant knee (111-112), while Milton describes Belial "in act more graceful and humane" (2.109), and has the "Portress of Hell" ironically speak of herself as "with attractive graces won" (2.762).

<sup>32</sup> Milton uses "stand" again in PR 4.561 to describe Christ's response to Satan who "falls" in 4. 562 with "amazement" and uses "stand" in Samson Agonistes (1637) to describe Samson's response to the Philistines.

<sup>33</sup> See William B. Hunter, "Grace," A Milton Encyclopedia where he notes that Dutch Remonstrants held that "divine grace comes (in varying degrees) to everyone who then has the freedom to accept or refuse it. Following Augustine in part, these Armenians thus developed the concept of prevenient grace: grace that is antecedent to

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conversion, the free gift of God, as distinguished from subsequent grace, which cooperates with man after his conversion” 3:134b.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen J. Duffy, The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology (Collegeville: Liturgical P, 1993) 95.

<sup>35</sup> See Sister Mary Corcoran, Milton’s Paradise, 1954, pp 104-105 quoted in Paradise Lost: A New Edition, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Macmillan, 1962) 63.

See also Roy Flannagan, Ed. The Riverside Milton (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) for note 38 on sufficient grace where he observes that “the doctrine of Sufficient Grace held that God created humankind with the grace to resist evil, but with a will that was free, though mutable (5. 236-37); the doctrine supported ‘the idea of liability to fall with which man was created’” (Maurice Kelley, This Great Argument 144) 419.

<sup>36</sup> Richard P. McBrien, Catholicism (San Francisco: Harper, 1994) 178.

<sup>37</sup> Jackson Campbell Boswell, “Milton and Prevenient Grace,” SEL, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Winter 1967): 83-94. Boswell refers the reader to St. Augustine’s De natura et gratia Contra duas epistolas pelagianorum.

<sup>38</sup> Ezek.11:19: “I will give them one heart and put a new Spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them.” See also Ezek. 36: 24-28.

<sup>39</sup> Patrides, Milton 204.

<sup>40</sup> Duffy 82.

<sup>41</sup> The citation for the various manifestations of grace occurs in the next citation.

<sup>42</sup> Duffy 95.

<sup>43</sup> Duffy 161.

<sup>44</sup> Fiore, Milton and Augustine 33-34. Milton in Christian Doctrine speaks of four degrees of death: first degree, all the evils which came into the world with the fall; (CD, I. XII. 393); second degree, spiritual death (CD, I. XII. 394-398); third degree, death of the body—Milton believes that the whole man dies, body, spirit, and soul (CD, I. XIII. I. 399-414); fourth degree, eternal death experienced by the damned (CD, I. XIII. 414). See also I. XXXIII. 614-633.

<sup>45</sup> See John Milton “Of the Punishment of Sin.” Christian Doctrine, YP, ed. Maurice Kelley, trans. John Carey (New Haven: Yale UP, 1973) I. XII. 394. Even though Milton holds that “some traces of the divine image still remain in us,” he recognizes that spiritual death first results in “the loss or at least the extensive darkening”

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of right reason and second “in the extinction of righteousness and of the liberty to do good, and in “slavish subjection to sin” and to Satan, ideas of course that appear in his epic.

<sup>46</sup> Fiore 34.

<sup>47</sup> Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson, Milton & Wordsworth: Poets and Prophets (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956) 100 and 101.

<sup>48</sup> Milton, “Epistle,” CD, YP VI: I.118-120.

<sup>49</sup> A.C. Labriola, Private Correspondence 11/14/07.

<sup>50</sup> Patrides 205

<sup>51</sup> Patrides 208

<sup>52</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I. XII.397.

<sup>53</sup> A. N. Wilson has written The Life of John Milton (New York: Oxford UP, 1983) and of C. S. Lewis: A Biography (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990). Below, I summarize a concern raised by remarks in the biography of C. S. Lewis about John Milton.

In his 1990 biography of Lewis, Wilson asks a question that he observes Lewis never faces either in his fictional works or in his theological writings: “Are we to suppose that human beings only exercise free will when they sin—or worse, only sin when they exercise free will? These questions were to make John Milton abandon any discernible belief in the doctrine of Grace and become a sort of Stoic” (184).

While Wilson gives no reference or explanation about Milton and the doctrine of Grace in his 1990 text, he leaves the reader of PL to fathom the problem, factor Wilson’s statement into what the reader knows of PL and CD, and resolve the issue in light of Milton’s prose and poetry rather than on Milton’s personal belief in the “doctrine of Grace,” which Wilson seems to know much about but has not shared the source of his knowledge with his reader.

Wilson’s 1983 biography of the poet does shed some light on young Milton the Stoic who found reading Plato and Xenophon more conducive to the virtue and austerity of life he envisioned as necessary for the poet than he found in the lives of Cambridge clerics. (106). When he matures, according to Wilson, Milton replaces his early Stoicism with the discipline of the Mosaic Law and the simplicity of the Old Testament. Writing of Paradise Regained, Wilson notes that Milton’s Christ “has many of the Stoic qualities himself. Moreover, the soteriology of the whole poem would seem, at first thought, more Stoic than Christian.” (249) Yet, Milton’s Christ rejects Stoicism for the Jewish prophets. Wilson observes:

It was an important part of Milton’s understanding of Christian liberty in the De Doctrina, to believe that Christ had superseded the Mosaic Law

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and that through Christ, having made us free from the law, we were redeemed not by our own works, but by grace. (250)

Wilson follows this sentence with an unexplained noun “lip-service,” two explanatory statements, and a conclusion:

To this idea in Paradise Regained, Milton again pays lip-service. But in Christ, of course, he cannot depict fallen nature dependent on grace. Nor does he choose to depict a man who is disillusioned with the Law, the Torah. It seems to contain all that we need to lead a virtuous life (250).

To what idea does Milton “again” pay “lip-service”? Christ supersedes the Mosaic Law? Christ frees us from law? We are redeemed not by works but by grace? What does seem clear in Wilson’s 1983 biography is that Milton needs and accepts the concept of “grace,” Christ frees man from the Mosaic Law, and man redeemed by Christ cannot glory in works but the grace of God.

The reader resolves the issue of Stoicism with Wilson’s 1983 text, but not the problem he raises about grace. The problem for the reader exists with the apparent contradiction between the 1990 biography of Lewis where Wilson asserts that Milton has abandoned the “doctrine of Grace” and the 1983 biography of Milton where he asserts grace is important for the work of redemption and Christian liberty. Just as the reader knows of William Empson’s issues with Christianity and his dislike of Milton’s portrayal of God and factors Empson’s attitude of Milton’s God into the background of his mind, so should the reader address Wilson’s statement and see whither his research leads and what it unfolds.

Neither liberty nor free will is the subject of this dissertation but grace in the economy of salvation in PL is integral to the discussion that follows. Both of Wilson’s statements about Milton in his two biographies cause this reader frustration as well as a response— a correlative of this dissertation—to unsubstantiated statements or to an ambiguous use of “it.” Moreover, Wilson’s statements re-focus my argument on Milton’s written words rather than on an unsubstantiated opinion even of respected biographer and critic as Wilson.

<sup>54</sup> C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, 82.

<sup>55</sup> See Arthur O. Lovejoy, “Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall,” ELH 4:3 (1973):161-179.



# Chapter V

## The Reader of Paradise Lost

**Overview:** In Chapter V, I first consider the transcendental experience of a reader of PL in light of Karl Rahner's anthropological-phenomenological method and the possibility that he/she may become a transcendent reader. Next, I address two topics concerned with the reader: (1) the philosophical shift that occurs in modern philosophy, theology, and later in literary criticism with "the turn toward the subject" anticipated by Milton in his concern for his reader; (2) reader response theory that develops as a result of the philosophical interest in the subject. I note Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser for reception theory and then examine reader response theory as Stanley Fish develops it.

In PL Milton makes the transcendent door between heaven and earth swing both ways. Milton gives the reader access to hell, heaven, and paradise and teaches the reader that human nature has ability for openness, for the possibility of transcending self. Mrs. Todd in Sara Orne Jewett's short story "The Foreigner" explains what readers of PL experience when she relates the death of the foreign lady, Mrs. Tolland, to her summer boarder, the narrator of the tale: "You know plain enough there's somethin' beyond this world; the doors stand wide open. There's somethin' of us that must still live on; we've got to join both worlds together an' live in one but for the other.' The doctor said that to me one day, an' I never could forget it; he said 'twas in one o' his old doctor's books."<sup>1</sup> At times, reading jolts the reader to look at an old truth in a new light because in the reading experience he or she perceives anew a truth taken for granted, integrating what Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007) calls a past experience with the present reading experience.<sup>2</sup> That jolt occurs with PL when Milton reminds the reader that existence opens to a

transcendent experience of the Divine and the reader must integrate past experience into the new reading experience.

Milton creates an epic drama for readers explaining his purpose in his first argument and introductory proem. Milton will not dwell on the anger of the warrior Achilles, the travels of Odysseus, or the establishment of Rome. He intends to instruct readers about grave disobedience, the loss of Paradise “through Satan in the Serpent” (I: Argument), and the rebellion of Satan with his angels. While he asserts that “Eternal Providence” guides creation, Milton also justifies “the ways of God to men” (I: 25-26) who often question the wisdom, justice, or mercy of the Divine in creating man with right reason and freedom of the will. In other words, from the beginning of his epic, Milton moves his reader to consider not earthly values but transcendent ones, especially as one in relationship with the Creator of mankind. For these reasons PL remains part of the world’s best literature and continues to challenge each generation of readers to consider the problems facing “our first parents” (XI: Argument).

Current descendants of these “first parents,” however, read PL in light of contemporary advances in theology, philosophy, anthropology, and the other sciences. The reader is, of course, a modern or contemporary reader. Stanley Fish agrees that when “one interprets Milton, the language should be allowed to generate questions of philosophy, theology, history, and politics.”<sup>3</sup> Since Milton clothes his epic in myth, readers of every generation have found new questions or threads to help them discover a way into the labyrinth of truth hidden within his poem. The idea and reality of grace embedded in PL is such a thread that calls for unraveling, for grace, a gift offered to all, has no set form when it appears—even through reading. Recognizing the challenges

reading PL would entail, Milton implores his muse in the Proem to Book VII to find him a “fit audience . . . though few (VII.31) because he intends to guide readers to a consciousness of the economy of salvation present within Genesis through his epic account. Consequently, in that light everything within PL becomes sacred instruction for his readers as the drama of the Garden unfolds in the theater of a reader’s consciousness. Upon reflection, readers understand that they too participate in the divine call to wholeness and the temptation to abandon it that Adam and Eve face.

### **PL and its Transcendental Experience for the Reader**

The transcendental, anthropological, and experiential approach of Karl Rahner (1904-1984) in philosophy and theology forms the basis for my understanding of a reader’s experience of transcendence as PL requires the reader to reach beyond the ordinary. Rahner, considered by theologians of seventy-one denominations in 1978 to be the greatest influence on their lives after Paul Tillich and Thomas Aquinas, even ahead of Martin Luther and St. Augustine,<sup>4</sup> offers a contemporary philosophical method that I find supports reader response criticism in reading PL. Rahner emphasizes that experience always begins with the person who possesses the potential of transcendence through the wonder of life, through questions of reality, or through the experience of reading that stretches the horizon of the mind. Perhaps a reader may not have the terminology to define the experience of reading PL, for a conjunction of philosophy and theology occurs in the epic. Therefore, what I have attempted to do is what Milton in CD tells his readers he has done: “For we are ordered to find out the truth about all things (I Thess. 5: 21), and the daily increase of light and truth fills the church much rather with brightness and

strength than with confusion.”<sup>5</sup> Milton may have objected to Rahner on the basis of his religion but not on the purpose of his investigations.

One of Milton’s characterizations of the human-divine relationship in PL that he takes from Genesis seems quite similar to that which Rahner articulates. Both Milton and Rahner find the word “stand” relevant in characterizing man’s attitude in response to a relationship with God. At critical moments in his last three works, Milton has his characters stand. In PL, Abdiel stands to rebuke Satan (5.804-807). Adam relates his experience of God forming Eve to Raphael: “Though sleeping where I lay, and saw the shape / Still glorious before awake I stood” (8.463-464), while Raphael, upon leaving Adam, urges him to “stand fast; to stand or fall / Free in thine own Arbitrement it lies” (8.640-641). After his disobedience, Adam replies to God: “in evil strait this day I stand / Before my judge, either to undergo / Myself the total Crime, or to accuse / My other self, the partner of my life” (10.125-126). After their judgment, both Adam and Eve stand at the place of judgment (11:1-4). In PR Christ stands to defy Satan (4.561), and Samson stands at two crucial moments in SA—to go with the Philistine Officer to the Temple of Dagon and just before he pulls down the Temple’s pillars (1637). For Rahner man in his transcendence always stands before the living God. His use of “stand” reveals his metaphysical anthropology as well as the pre-suppositions of theology, suppositions implied in narration and characterization in PL. For instance, “As spirits who know the absolute being, we stand before the latter as before a freely self-disposing person,” and “humanity always stands already before a God of revelation, before a God who operates in history.”<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Rahner links the act of standing with the ability to transcend: “Therefore insofar as, in our absolute and not wholly fulfilled transcendence, we stand

before the free God, our first question about being (a question that characterizes us as human) puts us before the possibility of a free activity of God with regard to us,” and “we possess an unlimited transcendence (openness) for being as such. Hence it belongs to our innermost nature to stand before God.” In addition, the verb “stand” implies that when Adam, Eve, their posterity, and the reader “stand” before the living God, they have insight, knowledge, and understanding of their actions—they have gained self-knowledge. As an erect humanity confronts the Divine with Milton or Rahner as guides, a reader confronts reality within the Divine dimension. Humanity must stretch its powers to hearken to the Divine message.

Thus, a contemporary reader may find Rahner offers a way of reading PL as a transcendent experience. Rahner synthesized philosophical anthropology with traditional dogmatics and integrated the German idealists into Thomistic metaphysics. Scholars see Rahner credible in his metaphysical analysis and anthropological method. His philosophical and theological insights open another way of understanding Milton in PL and CD for the contemporary reader who finds it difficult to think in Post-Reformation terms.

Rahner and the phenomenologists begin with the data of a person’s immediate experience, a consciousness of some phenomena. They place emphasis on the role of the perceiver, in this case the reader of PL, who discovers meaning from a text that expresses Milton’s rendering and understanding of Genesis and salvation history. Hence, Rahner’s philosophical method and experiential methodology, examining the phenomena of consciousness and its self-reflection upon the personal experience of an individual, bears the name anthropological (Greek anthropos, man). Rahner takes historical man and sees

him also as spirit with an unthematic experience of the transcendent in his daily life who finds himself a free, self-conscious, knowing person able to define himself in a world incapable of defining him. Moreover, a person always reaches for more, the beyond, in knowledge continually pushing the horizon of one's mind to discover new meanings or testing the frontiers of freedom and responsibility as he or she stretches his/her being. Rahner's transcendental and anthropological focus illuminates the Divine-human relationship in PL for the contemporary reader. Both Rahner and Milton set up the transcendent and the anthropological as two poles which pull man, as human spirit and as created being, in an interrelated dynamics of reciprocity. Milton incorporates both the transcendental and the anthropological polarity into his epic before Rahner and the phenomenologists so name them.

Andrew Tallon, editor of Rahner's philosophy dissertation Hearer of the Word (1994), summarizes Rahner's philosophy of religion, what scholars previously referred to as theodicy or natural philosophy. "Something/someone in the world speaks for something/someone beyond the world, where world, as the space-time continuum of sense intuition, is known as a world only when it is implicitly (at first) and explicitly (in philosophy) objectified in the movement . . . of consciousness transcending the world toward we know not where. . . , toward being as horizon of triune consciousness."<sup>7</sup> In that philosophical summary, Tallon captures the essential theodicy of what Milton poetically develops in PL: Milton the poet, creating Eden from his imagination and Scripture, speaks for God the Creator who breathes life and the dawn of reason into Adam and Eve, who, led by angelic instruction, stretch their minds beyond its finiteness

to grasp the limitlessness of Being that their own transcendental possibility opens before them.

In the Introduction to The Foundation of Christian Faith a mature Rahner explains his text as a “renewed understanding” of the “idea” of Christianity not as in the formulary of a catechism, but as an effort “to situate Christianity within the intellectual horizon of people today.”<sup>8</sup> Rahner like Milton has a reader in mind: one who wants to live “the totality of his own existence” with integrity and “intellectual honesty.”<sup>9</sup> Milton would have called such a reader a fit one. Rahner concludes his Introduction with an examination of man’s consciousness and openness to transcendental experience that has significance for readers of PL. Rahner’s idea of transcendental experience captures philosophically what Milton presupposed or assumed his “fit reader” capable of experiencing. Transcendence means that which lies beyond and above mankind’s ordinary experience, or that which surpasses ordinary, tangible human experience, or exceeds the ordinary limits of tangible reality<sup>10</sup> and characterizes a reader’s experience called to know God as the Transcendent source from whom all things come whether in Milton’s or Rahner’s texts. Rahner defines transcendence as something “unthematic” by which he means a form of awareness that precedes organized structured concepts, words, or arguments:

We shall call transcendental experience the subjective, unthematic necessary and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject that is co-present in every spiritual act of knowledge, and the subject’s openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality. It is an experience because this knowledge, unthematic but ever present, is a moment within and a condition of possibility for every concrete experience of any and every object. This experience is called transcendental experience because it belongs to the necessary and inalienable structures of the knowing subject itself, and because it consists precisely in the transcendence beyond any particular group of possible objects or categories. Transcendental

experience is the experience of transcendence, in which experience [, sic] the structure of the subject [, sic] and therefore also the ultimate structure of every conceivable object of knowledge [, sic] are present together and in identity. This transcendental experience, of course, is not merely an experience of pure knowledge, but also of the will and of freedom. The same character of transcendentality belongs to them, so that basically one can ask about the source and the destiny of the subject as a knowing being and as a free being together.<sup>11</sup>

Transcendence derives from the medieval need to define the attributes of being that defy division into categories; these attributes are called the transcendentals, the one, the good, the true, etc. In other words, man as being has the intellectual and spiritual capacity to be open intuitively to the transcendental properties or attributes of all being—unity, truth, goodness, and beauty—but may not have the philosophical vocabulary to describe such an experience especially if it involves Divine Being. The medievals formulated the vocabulary that the reader today uses to define the experience of openness to being and to the Divine.

Rahner's philosophical-anthropological explanations give contemporary readers of Milton's epic a philosophical vocabulary to define their reading experience. The center of Rahner's philosophy and theology lies in the mystery that is God's self-communication to his creatures in the Person of the God-Man. In fine, Rahner's approach has value for any literary text because he begins his inquiries with the experience of the person, but especially for a reader of PL who has an immediate experience of reading about Divine actions that bear on understanding the epic. Rahner and the phenomenologists would call that experience an original one because the reader recognizes transcendence and finds a self in some form of a relationship with the Divine through the office of the text. A relationship of God with man has over the centuries received the designation "grace" to signify that the Divine touches the human being who



responds to the call of God. Moreover, Rahner does not see grace as something tacked on to human nature like a superstructure as the neo-scholastics interpreted grace but as something integral to a person's experience of existence and his relationship with the Creator.<sup>12</sup> How fitting, then, that a reader may use the philosophical-anthropological method of the phenomenologists, Karl Rahner, and a few reader-response theorists to understand in one reflective moment not only the notion of transcendence, but also what the epic tells us about a Divine relationship in which he/she exists, through which one reaches the "higher Argument" embedded in PL, and that makes the Genesis account a lived event by Milton in the reader's imagination and mind.

### **Milton's Readers**

Stanley Fish in Surprised by Sin has taken Milton's reader as his subject with his thesis grounded in Milton's theme "Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit of that Forbidden Tree" (1.1-2). Fish holds that the reader is "simultaneously a participant in the action [of the poem] and a critic of his own performance."<sup>13</sup> Further, Fish intends Surprised by Sin to be a defense of PL against anti-Miltonist A. J. A. Waldock who saw "a disparity between Milton's intention and his performance" in PL so that internal pressures, such as Satan, within the poem threaten its "equilibrium." Moreover, Fish shifts "the coherence and psychological plausibility of the poem" from the text to its effects on the mind of its reader thereby reconciling opposing Miltonists with one thesis by which he asserts that "Paradise Lost is a poem about how its readers came to be the way they are; its method, 'not so much a teaching as an intangling,' is to provoke in its readers wayward, fallen responses which are then corrected by one of several authoritative voices (the narrator, God, Raphael, Michael, the Son)."<sup>14</sup>

Fish's approach to reading PL and his interpretation of the responsibility of the reader encouraged me to re-read PL with wonder and zest as well as with my inner eye turned on self-reflection. Yes, I was surprised by sin, but I also was staggered by grace seeing that reality disclosed throughout the text. Reader-response theory has flaws and Stanley Fish is the first to admit and describe his efforts to correct them. Blemishes though the theory has, Fish's interest in relocating interest from the text to the reader encourages the reader to dialogue with text and the community in which the text is read and lives. Consequently, this dissertation is the result of my reading of PL with Milton as the director-producer of the action in my mind and Stanley Fish as my reading guide who helps me discern the argument of grace inherent in the text. Along the way, I learned about other approaches to reader-response; they do not displace Fish but complement him.

Since reader-response theorists perceive the reader in different ways, their theories enrich one another. Literary theorist Wolfgang Iser also places responsibility on the reader to form meaning from the text, but Iser grounds his theory in philosophy. Iser cites phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) who finds that "cultural objects"—PL would be is a good example—arise "out of subjective activity" [the poet's] and address "themselves to subjects as personal subjects" [the reader] so that scholars "must concentrate partly on the cultural meaning itself and its effective gestalt, but also partly and correlatively on the real and multifarious personality which the cultural meaning presupposes and to which it continually refers."<sup>15</sup> Yet, Iser notes that even as the reader establishes a meaningful text from "the structure inherent in the text, it must not be forgotten that he [the reader] stands outside the text. The reader of PL stands, too,

outside Hell, Heaven, and Paradise, outside the text, and the “fit” reader understands both these facts by reflecting on his or her understanding. The reader’s position must therefore be manipulated by the text if one’s viewpoint is to be properly guided.<sup>16</sup> (Indeed, the reader must apply Iser’s principle to Iser as well.) Even though Milton attempts to manipulate the reader’s position, the “fit” reader retains independence to comprehend how the “fit” author bends the reader.

Assuredly, Milton crafts PL with the formation and manipulation of his reader in mind. However, so well does Milton manipulate a reader that Milton’s reader does not consider herself outside the text but an integral part of its dynamics. Therefore, the reader of PL, aware of manipulation, factors Iser’s principle into his reading experience, approaches Stanley Fish’s competent reader, and perhaps becomes a transcendent reader.

In a sense, Milton constructs his audience of readers by dividing them into fit and unfit. Stanley Fish understands the division of an audience into fit and unfit to be a “polemical strategy designed to neutralize criticism before it appears.” However, Fish observes, the strategy may work so well that one questions “the efficacy and point of the polemical effort itself.” Fish explains that “if one-half of your audience is presumed to be incapable of being persuaded because it is made up of persons not fit to be taught, and the other half is already persuaded because it is made up of persons who, like you, are members incorporate of an indwelling truth, it is hard to see how your writing could have any effect.”<sup>17</sup> I believe Milton intends to define his audience through the text so that the reader becomes fit through the process of reading. All are invited, but those who cannot comprehend the message of the text remain the unfit for Milton. Certainly, with the fit-though-few trope Milton appeals to an elitist complex in the reader that he uses as a

“powerful social control . . . for rhetorical purposes,” according to Daniel Shore.<sup>18</sup> The serious reader must resist the psychological pressure and temptation of the fit-though-few trope so that he fails not to perceive the underlying message of PL. We find the problem of the one and the many, dear to classical philosophy, in the fit-though-few trope in which Milton appeals to his reader.

Every reader of PL hearing about the fit-though-few wonders what characteristics Milton had in mind for his “fit” reader. In Of Education (1644) Milton gives the purpose of learning and quite possibly the characteristics of a reader of PL: “The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection.”<sup>19</sup> Herein the serious reader receives the answer to the question. In other words, in a didactic epic such as PL written during the troubled times of the Civil War and its aftermath the Restoration, Milton would expect of his reader a faith in God, perhaps even a desire to love God, and a familiarity with Sacred Scripture, such as with the command to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt: 5.4) that implies a person has to expect hardship as part of the bargain of Christianity. Certainly, Milton would expect an understanding and use of right reason.

Yet, every reader of PL cannot forget that culturally he or she is the heir of Reformation and Counter-Reformation culture where efforts to change, to educate, or to catechize permeated religious, political, and literary works. Milton, accordingly, brings Post-Reformation theological, philosophical, and political ideas to bear in an epic that instructs his reader. In fact, he sermonizes his reader in the guise of Satan—what not to

become—as well as in the forms of Raphael—how to avoid sin as prelapsarian man—and Michael—how to practice virtue as postlapsarian man. Thus, Milton requires knowledge of Scripture, and of course, he would expect a reader to have some familiarity with the structure and plot of classical and medieval epic, especially as he begins PL in media res.

Nevertheless, I hold that Milton also had in mind an “audience” of faith-filled or transcendent readers among his “fit” readers. These readers, who do not succumb to the temptation of elitist notions implied in “fit,” recognize and choose the reign of God over the rule of Satan as they participate in the epic as informed or competent readers. The epic leads them, opens them up, to a richer understanding of the transcendence of existence and perhaps to a recognition of the economics of grace and salvation in both text and reality. In an economics of salvation every jot and tittle holds meaning in the mystery of creation, everything links itself to what follows, and everything has value in individual and communal redemption so that nothing experienced is in vain. Hence, one who buys into the economics of salvation needs faith, virtue, and grace. Such in brief is Milton’s “higher Argument” that receives further treatment in Chapter Six. For his argument Milton draws upon centuries of theological scholarship making his epic virtually a textbook of grace as he re-creates the meeting of Uncreated Grace, the Divine Itself, with created grace in Adam and Eve.

Having examined the reader, I consider next what happens when historically focus shifts from the text to the reader of the text and the development of reader-response theory. Herein, I examine two issues concerned with the reader. First, I review the philosophical interest in the subject or the reader that occurs in seventeenth-century philosophy and its subsequent influence on the development of reader response theory

during the twentieth century. Under the umbrella of reader-response, I distinguish the work of Continental reception theorists from reader response theory that developed in America. Originally, I intended to address reader response only from the viewpoint of Stanley Fish because his position clarifies what I have experienced as a reader of PL. Consequently, when I learned of the Iser-Fish debate about indeterminacy and determinacy and whether the text or the reader controls meaning, I studied Iser to learn more about Fish. In truth, I found Iser's account of the phenomenology of reading compelling because he grounds the reading experience in phenomenology, complements Karl Rahner's approach in philosophy and theology, and assists me in defining the transcendent reader.

### **The Philosophical Shift of the Turn toward the Subject: Issue One**

Certainly, Milton in praying for a fit audience does not see his reader as passive but actively engaged with his epic text. In fact, his not so subtle remarks, such as that about Satan "Vaunting aloud, but rackt with deep despair (1.126), have the reader in mind whom Milton wishes to inform and influence. Milton anticipates the modern period's interest in the human subject with his focus on readers and the epic experience he presents to their consciousness. In the eighteenth century, novelists frequently address a "dear reader" that reflects the shifting pattern from an objective plot line to the inclusion of the subjective, the reader, into the text. In contradistinction, Milton, perhaps because he himself reads, incorporates the "turn to the reader" into his text in advance of the novel and just as modern philosophy makes the shift to the subject its focus.

William V. Dych associates the "turn to the subject" with modern philosophy when focus shifts in the late seventeenth century from the impersonal object under

investigation to a new subject of inquiry, the questioning or experiencing subject. The turn to the subject offers a framework by which contemporary readers can evaluate their own experience of existential transcendence. “In modern, transcendental philosophy it is the inquiring subject itself which has become the object of inquiry,” so that in “turning to the subject, modern philosophy has become ‘anthropocentric’ as distinguished from ‘cosmocentric,’ not in the sense that it is interested only in humanity and not in the rest of the cosmos, but in the sense that it draws its basic paradigms for understanding reality from human existence.” Thus, if we follow modern philosophy as it traces the shift toward the subject, “we acquire personal rather than impersonal categories in which to speak of human existence: self-presence, freedom, transcendence.”<sup>20</sup> The turn to the subject does not negate centuries of philosophical discourse about the “object known” or the “form possessed by the knower,” what the classical and medieval philosophers analyzed in their epistemologies, but shifts attention to the living subject, the one possessing the form, and, in fact, brings balance into the relationship of object known and subject knowing.

The philosophical foundation of the turn to the subject and indeed of reader response criticism historically occurs when Hobbes (1588-1679) in Leviathan (1651 English text; 1668 Latin text) with his philosophical analysis of man free from law and societal norms, when Descartes (1596-1650) in his mathematical paradigm for developing a new rational approach to philosophy in his Meditations (Latin, 1641), and when Locke (1632-1704) in his interest in the empirical nature of human reason in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) shift their interest toward the thinking subject during the seventeenth century. Similarly, later in the century, Immanuel Kant’s

(1724-1804) philosophical concern for human freedom causes him “to turn systematic reflection on human knowledge away from human beings as objects of observation toward a new concern to understanding the structures of conscious thought and choice within the subject.”<sup>21</sup> However, both Richard P. McBrien and Stephen Duffy locate the shift toward the subject earlier as occurring with Thomas Aquinas whose teachings on the inviolability of conscience place responsibility directly on the person acting, anticipating the Enlightenment’s interest in the person.<sup>22</sup> Even as Aquinas used Aristotle’s impersonalistic categories, he had, as Duffy explains, a personalistic thought form, that is, thought-content is what one knows; thought form, how one knows and approaches it.”<sup>23</sup> If this be so, one may reach father back into time to the confessional style of Augustine as anticipating the turn to the subject—a connection Milton would appreciate.

Philosophically, the turn toward the subject continues with Immanuel Kant in his examination of a priori reason and his philosophical interest in human freedom, with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) in his study of the contents of the objects of a person’s consciousness or phenomena of intentionality, and with Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) in his phenomenological interest in the person as knowing, acting, and doing in his/her historicity—that quality that characterizes a person as historical, finite, and temporal. Robert Holub observes that hermeneutics, the science of the study of the original meaning of texts, tries to overcome the “subject-object duality inherent in the scientific method” with a focus on the “historical nature of understanding” but creates a “hermeneutical dilemma” that Heidegger resolves by moving beyond Husserl. Heidegger returns to the classical focus on being. By situating being-in-the-world with Being and Time (1927), he affirms that “being itself is time.” Consequently, for Heidegger “the



life-world (lebenswelt) could no longer be ignored or ‘bracketed as Husserl’ demanded. Instead it must be considered as the center of the philosophical enterprise.”<sup>24</sup> The implication of being-in-the-world becomes important for Heidegger’s student Karl Rahner (1904-1984), who teaches that a person must first be [my emphasis] before he/she can reflect on existence and that the experience of self is simultaneously an experience of self-in-the-world. Along with existentialists, Husserl, Heidegger, and Rahner focus on the person existing in freedom but reaching for understanding within consciousness, a position that lays a philosophical foundation for reader-response theory.

Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), also a student of Heidegger, sees understanding in itself essential to being-in-the-world. He moves hermeneutics away from Scriptural exegesis or the experimental methodology of science in Truth and Method (1960) and proposes that hermeneutics becomes a science of understanding and interpretation in general, acting as “a corrective and metacritical endeavor” in opposition to modern science.<sup>25</sup> Paul de Man observes that hermeneutics concerns itself “with the meaning of specific texts,” and as a means to an end, that is a transparent text, “postulates a transcendental [my emphasis] function of understanding, no matter how complex, deferred, or tenuous it might be, and will in however mediated a way have to raise questions about the extralinguistic truth value of literary texts.”<sup>26</sup> Gadamer explains what occurs as a reader uncovers meaning:

When we try to understand a text, we do not try to transpose ourselves into the author’s mind but, if one wants to use this terminology, we try to transpose ourselves into the perspective within which he has formed his views. But this simply means that we try to understand how what he is saying could be right. [ . . . ] The task of hermeneutics is to clarify this miracle of understanding, which is not a mysterious communion of souls, but a sharing of common meaning.<sup>27</sup>

Gadamer sees Heidegger's "description and existential grounding of the hermeneutic circle" not as a "vicious" circle but as constituting a "decisive turning point."<sup>28</sup>

According to nineteenth-century understanding of the theory, "the circular movement of understanding runs backward and forward along the text, and ceases when the text is perfectly understood." In the attempt to explain the process of finding meaning from a text, a philosopher's explanations often seem complex for a reader who possesses meaning. Yet, philosophical explanations give the reader the necessary terminology to speak to the process. Heidegger, according to Gadamer, "describes the circle in such a way that the understanding of the text remains permanently determined by the anticipatory movement of foreunderstanding. The circle of whole and part is not dissolved in perfect understanding, but on the contrary, is most fully realized." Thus, the circle

is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to the tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in our relation to tradition. Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a 'methodological' circle, but describes an element of the ontological structure of understanding.<sup>29</sup>

Philosophical inquiry that analyzes the process by which readers understand and form meaning serves as a foundation for reader-response theory. In fact, Gadamer explicitly teaches that "every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and in which it seeks to understand itself."<sup>30</sup> Responsibility lies with critics, scholars, and readers to receive a

transmitted text, cherish it, but allow the text to pass to another age enriched with the insight and scholarship that the text rendered to the previous age.

Historically then, the shift toward the subject extends and intensifies with phenomenology,<sup>31</sup> the examination of the contents of one's consciousness, especially in its intellectual activity that begins with Husserl, continues with his student Heidegger, and persists in Heidegger's student Karl Rahner,<sup>32</sup> and moves forward into other disciplines. Heidegger's chief contribution to modern philosophy, according to Mark Taylor, consists in his anthropological viewpoint and recognition that being is "inseparably linked with the question of human existence," for a person "is that entity whose existence is always a question and a task, not simply something given." Friedrich Schleiermacher (d. 1834), a phenomenological precursor, teaches that we find God in our consciousness, if one finds Him at all. In Taylor's view Schleiermacher takes the anthropological shift toward the subject even further. Taylor observes that "the immediate object of theological reflection is no longer objective, God-given propositions of revelation, but rather the self-consciousness of the believer."<sup>33</sup> Rahner, however, adopts Heidegger's anthropological departure point—the disclosure of being within the human subject—as the basis of his metaphysical and theological anthropology. In general, contemporary theology and philosophy recognize that a person's existence and experience "must form the starting point and basis for theological reflection,"<sup>34</sup> Rahner specifically "understands the contemporary theological situation to be decisively shaped by the turn to the subject characteristic of modern philosophy," and "the question of God itself must be posed and answered in terms of the basic characteristic of the contemporary theological situation, namely, the turn toward the subject."<sup>35</sup> That is to say, if the

experience of the subject becomes the starting point of a philosophical anthropology, then the presence of Spirit in the world and reality seen in the context of the Divine also becomes a legitimate field of investigation.<sup>36</sup> Currently, philosophy and theology have made the turn toward the subject a primary point of departure for their reflections. Literary theory with its reader-response theories has also done the same even if it does not recognize its philosophical roots. The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason, verifiability, and experience extends the shift into other disciplines making the turn toward the subject more dramatic as evolving mankind discovers accountability and responsibility within his being and within his nature rather than in ancient authorities. Almost simultaneously with the shift toward the subject that happens in philosophy, another shift occurs in traditional ideas of God and Church. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Calvin's Reformed theologians re-formulate discipline and theology with a new understanding of covenant theology to cope with the changing times that require a rational method for defining the idea of God and His relationship with his creatures, such as Milton's approach in PL in justifying "the ways of God to man" (1: 26). Additionally, a new economic theory prevails in Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations (1776) that takes a market interest in persons that instigates divisions between church, state, and economy that escalate through the centuries. As formative as the shift toward the subject is in changing focus, a divorce has occurred that gradually takes God out of the public forum, out of public life, and out of philosophical debate.

When one moves forward chronologically to the phenomenological method of the Modern and Postmodern Periods, one sees this method as relevant to a contemporary reader of PL. Milton's consideration in crafting his epic to his "fit audience" makes him

historically relevant in the shift toward the subject. Milton does for literature and the reader what subsequently philosophy would do for the person—locates the action within the consciousness of the person. Phenomenological similarities exist between Rahner’s person who hears the Gospel message and the reader who reads Milton’s epic. Both Rahner and Milton engage God as Spirit, portray man as possessing a spiritual dimension, and address the function of transcendence in its relationship to knowledge, freedom, and responsibility. While Rahner describes [my emphasis] man’s relationship to the transcendent ground, God, in terms of creatureliness<sup>37</sup> and of man to himself in terms of “the universal question which he is for himself”<sup>38</sup> in his philosophical-theological treatise, Milton expresses [my emphasis] a relationship with the Divine by characters in his epic who question the logic and commands of their Creator and eventually suffer angst in betrayal of that relationship. Moreover, CD reveals Milton himself in a methodical search of Scripture for answers to his theological questions; his arduous, painstaking proof-texts later make clear the theology of PL. The contemporary reader of the epic, then, brings an individual conscious experience of awareness of being a transcendent person, who, while reading PL, discovers a seventeenth-century epic that reveals transcendence in terms of a divine-human relation under pre and postlapsarian conditions. What then does transcendence mean for the reader?

According to Rahner, the subject or person in knowing or experiencing anything, especially a value or a sense of the Divine, simultaneously experiences transcendence, which, surprisingly because it is present in every experience, is often overlooked. Transcendental experience, as explained above, is the “subjective, unthematic, necessary and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject that is co-present in every spiritual

act of knowledge, and the subject's openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality."<sup>39</sup> Both Rahner and Dych use "the image of a horizon" borrowed from philosophers such as Nietzsche, Husserl, and Gadamer who use the term and image of a horizon as a context, atmosphere, or background<sup>40</sup> to explain how the "experience of the finite world opens us to a horizon which ever recedes as we move through the finite."<sup>41</sup> The horizon reveals that "there is always a 'more' to be known and to be loved and to be lived. We are aware of it, but can never reach it; it is there, but it ever exceeds our grasp."<sup>42</sup> When traditional Thomistic philosophy also adopts the turn to the subject, it becomes known as transcendental Thomism, or an understanding of the "absolute openness of the human subject in its unlimited transcendence" that "brings us not to a content of knowledge which we grasp, but to an absolute question. This experience of the unattainable and the incomprehensible we call the experience of mystery."<sup>43</sup> The shift to the subject interests theologians because it allows them to look at grace with the focused lens now on the person. At the same time, the turn to the subject sheds light on the faith and grace-filled reader because it points to and implies the potential, the possibility, and even the necessity, of a subjective experience by a reader who "turns to the self" in a reflexive encounter stimulated by a text that may move the reader beyond the text into a transcendental experience, precisely what may occur in a grace-filled moment to a reader of PL.

The turn toward the subject in philosophy and theology bears on both the reader and contemporary reader-response theory where literary theorists reflect upon an author's relationship with his reader and the reader's processing of the text. The authors of A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory conclude their overview of various

reader-response theories by declaring that “reader-oriented theories have no single or predominant philosophical starting point; the writers we have considered belong to quite different tradition of thought; and there are few common terms or positions among them.”<sup>44</sup> I question this statement because it is precisely the turn to the subject observable first in philosophy that is the common denominator among all reader-response theories, that makes sense of this aspect of literary theory, and that every reader experiences. Behind the theories, however, lies the search for a reader’s grasp of a text that modern philosophy and literary theorists seek to supply such as Wolfgang Iser does in The Art of Reading where he understands his theory as continuing the work of Husserl.

An anthropological starting point from experience rather than a traditional scientific one has revolutionized traditional philosophy, theology, and, by extension other disciplines. As a result of the shift to the subject, these disciplines realize that generalized, abstract, objective answers no longer satisfy the thoughtful reader. The contemporary reader needs to see, wants to understand, and has to recognize the “point of mediation between question and answer, between philosophy and theology,”<sup>45</sup> and, by extension, Milton’s epic and its relevance to a reader’s life, the search for meaning, and for transcendence. Fortunately, for Milton and the reader, Milton was in the vanguard of the turn-to-the-subject movement incorporating into his text for his readers not only elements of transcendence but strategies for achieving transcendence and meaning through the homily of the Father, the Father-Son dialogues, the instruction of Raphael and Michael, the good example of Abdiel, and the bad example of Satan. Quite possibly what the twenty-first century reader recognizes as an incorporation of elements of

transcendence into PL may not have been deliberate on Milton's part because the reality of transcendence was a commonplace for seventeenth-century readers.

### **Reader-Response Theory or the Turn toward the Reader: Issue Two**

Logically following the philosophical shift toward the subject, the literary theory of reader-response with its emphasis on the reader offers a method of reading PL with the reader in mind. Reader-response theory develops as a reaction to New Criticism's emphasis on the text itself as the source of meaning, while New Criticism itself develops as a reaction to an old Criticism concerned with matters outside the text such as historical and biographical data. Yet, reader-response theory is as old as Aristotle who in his Poetics notes the effects of tragedy on the viewer in purging his emotions. New categories of readers occur during the fourth quarter of the last century when critics define readers as an implied reader (Wayne C. Booth, Wolfgang Iser), a superreader (Michael Riffaterre), the ideal reader (Culler), the actual reader (Hans Robert Jauss), or an informed competent reader (Stanley Fish), or an intended reader (Erwin Wolff) who may be either an idealized or contemporary reader. M. H. Abrams has created the term Newreader to refer especially to Jacques Derrida, Harold Bloom, and Stanley Fish. These readers discover meaning encoded within a text, understand the stylistic clues the author gives the reader, and define or react to attitudes or positions within a text.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps, in this long list of readers the transcendent reader may also find a place.

Among reader-response theorists and readers interested in reader-response in the United States, the work of West German reception theorists at the University of Konstanz, especially Hans Robert Jauss, their principal spokesperson, and Wolfgang Iser, German literary critic, have received a favorable welcome in this country. Reception



theorists aim “to develop a new mode of literary history based not on a simple positivistic acceptance of received tradition but rather on an investigation of the literary reception of canonical works, and on the ways in which the experience of the literary by its readers mediates the relationship of past and present.”<sup>47</sup> Since Stanley Fish has challenged Iser on the location of meaning for a reader, I include a brief overview of Jauss and Iser before I address the work of Fish, and what he makes of the issue of determinacy and indeterminacy by which he challenges Iser. Additionally, Iser’s phenomenology of reading helps define the transcendent reader.

### **Reception Theory and Hans Robert Jauss**

The phenomenological studies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) about consciousness influence Hans Robert Jauss (1921-1997), a proponent of reception theory. Phenomenologists in general define “literary experience as a gestalt, holistically, with a minimal sense of separation between text and its interpretation.”<sup>48</sup> Merleau-Ponty, a French phenomenologist working on consciousness, develops a “philosophy of ambiguity,” that is to say, “the objects of one’s experience are by nature enigmatic,”<sup>49</sup> while Gadamer, philosopher of hermeneutics and phenomenology, teaches that art, because it reveals an essential meaning of its subject, says more about a subject than the facts revealed by empirical data. Consequently, reception theorists and reader-response theorists explore the shift from author and text to reader and text. While reader response theorists generally are independent scholars working throughout the world, reception theory is an umbrella phrase that includes the work of Hans Robert Jauss (1921-1997), Wolfgang Iser, and others at the University of Konstanz. Reception theory is “a cohesive, conscious, and collective undertaking” or a

movement begun in West Germany marked by an essay by Jauss in 1969 where he “postulated that the beginning of a ‘revolution’ in contemporary literary studies were at hand.”<sup>50</sup> Jauss, influenced by phenomenology, introduces the phrase “reception theory” to explain what happens between readers and the text. Not so much interested in a single reader’s response as to the responses of the reading public to a text over time, Jauss takes a middle position between Russian Formalism that disregards history and social criticism that disregards the text [my emphasis].<sup>51</sup> Influenced by the scientific paradigm theory of T. S. Kuhn (1922-1996), Jauss argues that the older critical methods no longer satisfy the needs of readers. Criticism and literature need a new paradigm to judge a text; that new paradigm will change when it becomes obsolete. Jauss argues that literature requires a paradigm that takes into account “qualitative jumps, discontinuities, and original points of departure” including “methodological procedures” for criticism, “literary scholarship,” and the “accepted literary canon.” Jauss devises a phrase coined from Gadamer, “horizon of expectations,” to explain “the criteria readers use to judge literary texts” which help them determine what is poetry or prose or what is an unpoetic or non-literary use of language.<sup>52</sup> M. H. Abrams explains reception theory further: “The responses of a particular reader, which constitutes for that reader the meaning and aesthetic qualities of a text, is the joint product of the reader’s own ‘horizon of expectations’ and the confirmations, disappointments, refutations, and reformulations of these expectations when they are ‘challenged’ by the features of the text itself.” Over time, a body of criticism develops available to readers so that an “evolving historical ‘tradition’ of critical interpretations and evaluations” influence readers. Under the influence of Gadamer, Jauss sees that between the text and the “horizons of successive readers,” over the years,

a “dialogue” occurs. Consequently, “a literary text possesses no fixed and final meanings or value”<sup>53</sup> since the dialogue of readers over time destabilizes a fixed meaning for the text.

### **Wolfgang Iser**

Another aspect of reception theory develops with Gadamer’s student, Wolfgang Iser, in The Implied Reader where he draws on Wayne Booth’s idea of an implied author and references the work of early phenomenologists, Husserl and Heidegger. For both Husserl and Heidegger “phenomenology is a philosophical position that posits a continuous field of experience between the perceiver (subject) and the object of experience and focuses on bringing to light the relations of subject and object.”<sup>54</sup> Consequently, phenomenologists believe that “objects-in-the-world cannot be the valid focus of a rigorous philosophical investigation. Rather the contents of consciousness itself—‘objects’ as constituted by the mechanism of consciousness—should be investigated.”<sup>55</sup> Examining the contents of consciousness of readers, Wolfgang Iser sees the text made real for a reader because he/she brings to a reading his/her experience, values, and norms that color the reading of the text— that is, a phenomenology of reading. Iser devotes Part III of The Act of Reading to the “Phenomenology of Reading” indicating the shift in literary theory from concentration on the text to the reader whereby he/she processes, grasps, participates in, and synthesizes a text so that, as he explains, “through formulating” a totality of meaning, we “formulate ourselves and thus discover an inner world of which we had hitherto not been conscious.”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Iser understands the reading experiences he has described as an extension of modern philosophy by which “at this point the phenomenology of reading merges into the

modern preoccupation with subjectivity.” Iser sees his work as a continuation of Husserl who “had already considerably modified the Cartesian cogito—the self-affirmation of the ego in the consciousness of thought—by pointing out the discrepancies between the degrees of certainty of the cogito and the degrees of uncertainty of the conscious mind.”<sup>57</sup> Iser holds that a reader has the responsibility for filling the “gaps” that complete the work of the author in the reader’s mind such as making connections between paragraphs, chapters, or stanzas. Indeed, Iser clarifies the concept of “contemporary reader” in The Act of Reading where he insists “there are three types of ‘contemporary’ readers—the one, real and historical, drawn from existing documents, and the other two hypothetical: the first constructed from social and historical knowledge of the time, and the second extrapolated from the reader’s role laid down in the text.”<sup>58</sup> Following the phenomenological principles of Roman Ingarden (1893-1970), Iser teaches that the reader has a creative role in the reading process, but the text by its internal prompting controls the reader’s interpretation. Iser recognizes that the reader holds an important place in literary theory concerned with the interpretation of texts, but the question he raises is what kind of reader does a text require? Iser calls him “the implied reader” for “he embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect—predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself.” For Iser, the implied reader “as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader.” Thus, the implied reader as a “textual construct” reaches out to the meaning encoded in the text to find certain “conditions of actualization” that permit the reader to assemble meaning. In other words, the text anticipates “the presence of a recipient without

necessarily defining him.”<sup>59</sup> As a result, the ambiguity of Iser’s position sparked the Iser-Fish debates in Diacritics about indeterminacy.

Of course, among Milton’s intended readers he had in mind a group he called “fit” ones. Milton, more specific than Iser, would perhaps argue with Iser on one point because Milton’s implied readers, his “fit audience,” a construct of his mind and text, are also real readers who, Milton thought, would comprehend his epic on its spiritual level.

### **Reader-Response Theory**

I. A. Richards (1893-1979), an initial reader-response theorist, as early as 1923 in Principles of Literary Criticism and 1929 in Practical Criticism recognizes that critics “are often compelled, for example, to say things about the poem, or the words in it, which are only true of the effects on the minds of its readers . . . .”<sup>60</sup> New Critics never discount the reader, but, as W. K. Wimsatt (1907-1975) and Monroe C. Beardsley (1915-1985) argue in response to Richards in “The Affective Fallacy” (1946), to evaluate a poem with its effects on the reader constitutes a fallacy by which a poem disappears and the reader’s impression of it leads to relativism in literature. Moreover, such a state of affairs in a classroom would lead to impressionism, “skepticism, a complete confusion of values,” and possible “anarchy” as Rene Welleck (1903-1995) and Austin Warren (1899-1986) argue in Theory of Literature.<sup>61</sup> Richard Beach admits that “it is difficult to pinpoint any specific date when theorists moved away from thinking about the literary experience as purely a textual matter and began thinking of the experience as involving readers.” By 1967 reader-response theorists in conference at Dartmouth recognize the need to draw students into the reading experience arguing that “active expression of response in the

classroom contributed to students' literacy development.”<sup>62</sup> At the same time, Stanley Fish articulates his challenges to New Criticism specifically choosing PL as his forum.

Richard Beach has identified five points of view for reader-response theorists that illuminate their relationships among text, reader, and context. The “textual” theorist draws upon a reader’s knowledge of literary conventions while he/she engages the text as does Georges Poulet (1902-1991), Roman Ingarden, Iser, and Jauss who argue from phenomenology. The “experiential” theorist accounts for the reader’s education, life experience, and cognitive responses that he/she brings to reading a text, such as how Louise Rosenblatt, drawing on John Dewey (1859-1952) and William James (1842-1910), formulates the theory in 1938 for her Literature as Exploration. The “psychological” theorist draws upon conscious and subconscious forces acting upon readers by using psychological-developmental theories of cognitive and moral reasoning as articulated by Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987), by the psychological work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Jung (1875-1961) advocated by Norman Holland (1927- ), and by the use of Jacques Lacan’s (1901-1981) psychoanalytic theory of language advanced by Marshall Alcorn and Michael Brancher. “Social” theorists include the social context that bears upon a reader’s transaction with a text as articulated by Stanley Fish, the dialogic criticism of Mikhail Bakhtin (1875-1975), David Bleich (1936- ), and Clark Holquist who find interest in situations wherein speech occurs. Speech-act and sociological theory investigates how a speaker uses language in a specific context to determine language, a theory formulated by John Searle (1932- ) and H. Paul Grice (1913-88). “Cultural” theorists concentrate on how culture shapes gender roles (Gilligan), ideological class affects attitudes (Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton, Catherine

Belsey), and ethnographic values concern readers (Penelope Eckert).<sup>63</sup> Each of these categories has subdivisions that together unfold a convincing argument that the reader takes an active role in formulating meaning while reading.

Within the vast plethora of divisions among each of Beach's five perspectives, I focus on Stanley Fish and his evolving theory of the reader because he best characterizes the turn to the subject characteristic of philosophy in his theory of reader, author, and text relationship that he has developed in the forty years since Surprised by Sin (1967). Because Fish documents his developing theory in essays over the years as he questions his own positions, he is perhaps the best example of an informed reader. In an essay "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" (1970),<sup>64</sup> Fish defines his idea of the informed reader as a person who must be "a competent speaker of the language out of which the text is built up." This reader should be possessed with "the semantic knowledge that a mature . . . listener brings to his task of comprehension. This includes the knowledge (that is, the experience, both as a producer and comprehender) of lexical sets, collocation of probabilities, idioms, professional and other dialects, etc." Moreover, he/she possesses "literary competence."<sup>65</sup> Fish reveals the identity of his competent, informed reader: "The reader, of whose response I speak, then, is this informed reader, neither an abstraction, nor an actual living reader, but a hybrid—a real person (me) who does everything within his power to make himself informed."<sup>66</sup> By locating meaning within the reader and evaluating the effects of a text upon a reader rather than in an objective text, Fish recognizes that he affirms and embraces the Affective Fallacy condemned by Wimsatt and Beardsley. He also sees that on the one hand, the reader's

mind becomes responsible for producing meaning, but, on the other hand, the author of a text has formed a reader's competencies.

In "Interpreting the Variorum" (1973), Fish looks at the volumes of the Milton Variorum and knows that multiple readings of certain passages in Milton are possible. How can a reader resolve this problem? Previously, Fish assumed and held that the reader and text constituted "independent and competing entities," a position held by formalists as well. In "Interpreting the Variorum," as he explains, both reader and text collapse; "they fall together." The text falls when Fish raises an objection to himself: "If the content of a reader's experience is the succession of acts he performs, and if he performs those acts at the bidding of the text, does not the text then contain everything and have I not compromised my antiformalist position?" In this 1973 essay, Fish admits that for the first time: "I was directly confronting my relation to formalism rather than simply reacting to the accusation that I was a closet formalist." He has to resolve whether "formal patterns of the text are assumed to exist independently of the reader's experience." Letting go of that "enabling assumption," he discovers that "the formal features with which I began are the product of the interpretative principles for which they are supposedly evidence:

I did what critics always do: I "saw" what my interpretative principles permitted or directed me to see and then I turned around and attributed what I had "seen" to a text and an intention. What my principles direct me to "see" are readers performing acts; the points at which I find (or to be more precise, declare) those acts to have been performed become (by a sleight of hand), demarcations in the text; and those demarcations are then available for the designation "formal features," and as formal features they can be (illegitimately) assigned the responsibility for producing the interpretation which in fact produced them.<sup>67</sup>



Herein Fish records his break with formalism as he reverses the relationship between a reader's interpretation and the text. He concludes "unqualifiedly" that "formal units are always a function of the interpretative model one brings to bear (they are not 'in the text'). Indeed, the text as an entity independent of interpretation and (ideally) responsible for its career drops out and is replaced by texts that emerge as the consequence of our interpretive activities."<sup>68</sup>

For Fish the interpretative act of the reader takes on significance. Fish opposes the assumption "that there is a sense, that it is embedded or encoded in the text, and that it can be taken in at a single glance."<sup>69</sup> Rather than ignore or devalue a reader, he maintains that "the reader's activities are at the center of attention," and these activities "have meaning" because they are not "empty." Fish notes the activities the reader performs: first, he or she makes and revises assumptions; second, renders and regrets judgments; third, arrives at and abandons conclusions; fourth, gives and withdraws approval; fifth, specifies causes; sixth, asks questions; seventh, supplies answers; and eighth, solves puzzles<sup>70</sup> Now, Fish argues that these activities are "interpretative" and flow from the "structure of the reader's experience." During this process the reader performs a "successions of decisions" that reveal "an author's intentions."<sup>71</sup> Understanding an author's intention is but one of the acts a reader performs within the structure of the reading experience.

Fish anticipates and describes two objections, both in terms of circularity to his argument. First, "I describe the experience of a reader who in his strategies is answerable to an author's intention, and I specify the author's intention by strategies employed by the same reader;" second, "if the content of the reader's experience is the succession of acts

he performs in search of an author's intention, and if he performs those acts at the bidding of the text, does not the text then produce or contain everything—intention and experience—and have I not compromised my antiformalist position?"<sup>72</sup> Fish responds to his question by denying that either formal patterns or intention are "in" the text because "formal units are always a function of the interpretative model one brings to bear" on a text. Thus, Fish holds that "the form of the reader's experience, formal units, and the structure of intention are one, and they come into view simultaneously, and that therefore the questions of priority and independence do not arise."<sup>73</sup> In other words, "intention, form, and the shape of the reader's experience" occur in a single interpretative act. Fish candidly admits that he does not know "what is that act of interpretation of," but he claims that no one else can answer that question even though they may try.<sup>74</sup>

Fish establishes himself as a critic of his own theory in interpreting texts in Is There a Text in This Class? (1980). The Introduction, "How I Stopped Worrying and Learned To Love Interpretation," chronicles his journey through reader-response theory. After he defines his roles as reader and critic, Fish applies his "critical assumptions" in Self Consuming Artifacts (1994) by casting himself as the "good physician," who through a dialectical experience, leads readers first to a "conversion," disturbing his readers by "a searching and rigorous scrutiny of everything they believe in and live by."<sup>75</sup> Second, the good physician directs his readers to another way of seeing reality—

the way of the good, the way of inner light, the way of faith; but whatever the designation, the moment of its full emergence is marked by the transformation of the visible and segmented world into an emblem of its creator's indwelling presence . . . , and at that moment the motion of the rational consciousness is stilled, for it has become indistinguishable from the object of its inquiry.<sup>76</sup>

Third, while the reader responds to the physician's art, he discovers the effect of the poem in himself as "the reader's self (or at least his inferior self) is consumed as he responds to the medicinal purging of the dialectician's art, and that art, like other medicines, is consumed in the workings of its own best efforts."<sup>77</sup> Finally, affirming that "the proper object of analysis is not the work, but the reader," Fish once again restates his issues with the Affective Fallacy "invented and defined by Wimsatt and Beardsley" in The Verbal Icon (1954) that recognizes the confusion that occurs between what a poem "is" and what it "does" for a reader when one "begins by trying to derive the standards of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism. The outcome is that the poem tends to disappear."<sup>78</sup> Fish avows and accepts that fallacy as a principle for himself in "Literature in the Reader" (1970). To Wimsatt and Beardsley's argument, Fish replies that "this is precisely what happens when we read—the work as an object tends to disappear—and that any method of analysis which ignores the affective reality of the reading experience cuts itself off from the source of literary power and meaning."<sup>79</sup>

Subsequently, Fish exposes readers to an experience of reading PL from Milton's philosophical position of monism when "God shall be All in All (3.341), a philosophical and theological reality that takes a reader the entire text of PL to absorb, maybe even a lifetime of reflection. In 1994 Fish notes in his Preface to the Second Edition of Surprised by Sin that one cannot discount "the centrality to Milton's thought of monism." Monism colors Milton's account of evil, determines his epistemology, enters into a definition of heroism, morality, erotics, politics, happiness, aesthetics, and generates a theory of value.<sup>80</sup> Fish discovers among the variety and plurality of PL a "unity" and an

“underlying sameness.”<sup>81</sup> Having established the role of the reader interpreting a text and the role the writer plays in bringing a reader to a new vision, Fish In How Milton Works (2001) gives his reader a paradigm of three theses: thematic, epistemological, and interpretative, by which to understand Milton. Fish’s general rule is that “Milton works from the inside out” with precedence given to an inner reality (thematic) especially in terms of knowledge, truth, and belief (epistemological) that generates interpretative “questions of philosophy, theology, history, and politics.”<sup>82</sup> However, he clearly asserts the fundamental principle underlying Milton’s works and the theology of PL:

within the assumptions of Milton’s theology, there is only one choice—to be or not to be allied with divinity—because there is only one meaning, and what might appear to be a succession of different situations is in fact the same situation wearing the thin disguise of temporal variation . . . . There is quite literally no where to go and only one thing to do, and the essential truth about things will not be altered by either your success or your failure in doing it.<sup>83</sup>

Fish argues, then, for a priestly Milton urging his readers to opt for the kingdom of God and to search for the Divine.

Aligning himself with reader-response theorists by describing the role of the reader in exacting meaning from the text as his theory of the reader evolves, Fish shares with his readers both advances and mistakes in its development. Self-Consuming Artifacts (1972) has “two senses: the reader’s self (or at least his inferior self) is consumed as he responds to the medicinal purging of the dialectician’s art, and that art, like other medicines, is consumed in the workings of its own best effects.” In other words, as the reader reads, the “text tends to disappear” as one internalizes it.<sup>84</sup> In a sense the reader becomes the text.

Written in 1980 before his second preface for Surprised by Sin (1997), the introduction to Is There a Text in This Class? is as much apologia as it is theory. In his introductory essay “Introduction, or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Interpretation,” Fish traces the evolving process of his idea of reader-response. In 1970 he had wondered if meaning resided in the reader or the text. By asking such a question, he confronts the intentional and affective fallacies that Wimsatt and Beardsley had warned against in The Verbal Icon (1954):

I challenged the self-sufficiency of the text by pointing out that its (apparently) spatial form belied the temporal dimension in which its meanings were actualized, and I argued that it was the developing shape of that actualization, rather than the static shape of the printed page, that should be the object of critical experience. In short, I substituted the structure of the reader’s experience for the formal structure of the text on the grounds that while the latter were the more visible, they acquired significance only in the context of the former. This general position had many consequences. First of all, the activities of the reader were given a prominence and importance they did not have before: if meaning is embedded in the text, the reader’s responsibilities are limited to the job of getting it out; but if meaning develops, and if it develops in a dynamic relationship with the reader’s expectations, projections, conclusions, judgments, and assumptions, these activities (the things a reader does) are not merely instrumental or mechanical, but essential, and the act of description must begin and end with them.<sup>85</sup>

Fish thus gives readers a role in formulating meaning they never had before by dislodging the text from its premier position. Both text and reader share joint responsibility for discovering meaning. “The reader’s response is not to the meaning; it is the meaning, or at least the medium in which what I wanted to call the meaning comes into being, and therefore to ignore or discount it is, or so I claimed, to risk missing a great deal of what is going on.”<sup>86</sup> Under such thinking, the reader learns literary self-reliance.

Fish admits that as a result of his arguments in “Literature and the Reader” (1970) in defense of the reader and against the autonomy of the text, he came to

understand a flaw in his thinking in that “I could not both declare my opposition to new critical principles and retain the most basic of those principles—the integrity of the text—in order to be able to claim universality and objectivity for my method.”<sup>87</sup> He kept text and reader arguments separate in his mind so that “by never putting the two arguments together,” he misses the reality that “I was moving in two (incompatible) directions at once: in the one the hegemony of formalism was confirmed and even extended by making the text responsible for the activities of its readers; in the other those same activities were given a larger and larger role to the extent that at times the very existence of the text was called into question.”<sup>88</sup> He confronts the subjectivity of the reader’s response in 1972 in “How Ordinary is Ordinary Language?” by “reconceiving” the reader so as “to eliminate” the “subjective,” and by arguing that ordinary language, “the neutral language that is responsible to or reflects the world of objective fact,” is also “the realm of values, intentions, and purposes which is often assumed to be the exclusive property of literature.”<sup>89</sup>

Fish resolves the subjective element in reader-response by arguing that literature “is a conventional category. What will, at any time, be recognized as literature is a function of a communal decision as to what will count as literature.” Potentially, the community could consider the literary properties in any text as literature rather than literature itself. When the literary community pays “a certain kind of attention” to a text, their attention “results in the emergence into noticeability of the properties we know in advance to be literary.” Fish concludes that “while literature is still a category, it is an open category, not definable by fictionality, or by a disregard of propositional truth, or by a predominance of tropes and figures, but simply by what we decide to put into it.”

Thus, he qualifies his statement that the reader “makes literature,” not as “a free agent,” but as a “member of a community whose assumptions about literature determine the kind of attention he pays and thus the kind of literature ‘he’ ‘makes.’”<sup>90</sup>

Stanley Fish captured my attention because he writes of his close reading of PL in Surprised by Sin within the New Criticism tradition, but he makes claims for Milton and his reader that move beyond that tradition. Fish in a sense frees the reader from slavery to the text to a dialogue with it and the author that requires of a reader not merely passive acceptance of a text but rather active engagement with it as a reader engages it and since it lives creatively within the reader. I do not challenge either the truth of Fish’s reading or his formulation of reader-response theory. In fact, I embrace both, celebrate his courage and scholarship. Moreover, I wish to engage his sense of reader entanglement by moving the reader forward from a sense of sin to the offer of grace touching the reader’s “stony heart” after his “fall” and the metanoia or change of heart that grace offers him. Yes, the reader is surprised by the greatness of sin, but he is also surprised by the generosity of grace.

I do not think Fish overlooks the other side of sin, but he has a theory and a method to defend. Grace would have enmeshed him in theological issues. He chooses sin, familiar to readers to demonstrate the truth of his thesis that “Paradise Lost is a poem about how its readers came to be the way they are,” and its method, “not so much a teaching as an intangling.”<sup>91</sup> In the Preface to the First Edition of Surprised by Sin, Fish defines his approach to man’s first disobedience for the reader who in reading the epic becomes both “participant in the action and a critic of his own performance.”<sup>92</sup> In his first chapter, he offers three suggestions that mark the direction of both text and his

position. Fish holds that the reader is the center of “reference” in the poem, that “Milton’s purpose is to educate the reader to an awareness of his position and responsibilities as a fallen man,” and that Milton’s “method is to re-create in the mind of the reader the drama of the Fall.”<sup>93</sup> Milton creates a drama in the mind for Fish’s competent reader entangling the person in original sin that authorizes the modern reader to explore other dimensions of what is possible with Milton. For that reason, I find what Fish does to make the reader the “centre of reference” of PL and his articulation of reader-response theory a means to address what Milton intends his readers to know about grace, salvation, and integrity—the return to the original wholeness or integration that Adam and Eve experienced before their Fall and for which Milton’s “fit audience” struggles to achieve in becoming transcendent readers. Milton, then, in PL makes the Transcendent available to the reader through a literary experience that the reader may translate into a lived relationship with the Divine.



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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Orne Jewett, The County of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994)187.

<sup>2</sup> Wolfgang Iser in “Grasping the Text” in The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) explains the process of integrating past experience and the present reading experience: “Experiences arise only when the familiar is transcended or undermined; they grow out of the alteration or falsification of that which is already ours. . . . Reading has the same structure as experience, to the extent that our entanglement has the effect of pushing our various criteria of orientation back into the past, thus suspending their validity for the new present. This does not mean, however, that these criteria or our previous experiences disappear altogether. On the contrary, our past still remains our experience, but what happens now is that it begins to interact with the yet unfamiliar presence of the text. This remains unfamiliar so long as our previous experiences are precisely as they had been before we began our reading. But in the course of the reading, these experiences will also change, for the acquisition of experience is not a matter of adding on—it is a restructuring of what we already possess” 131-132.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Fish, How Milton Works (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 2001) 24.

<sup>4</sup> See Geoffrey B. Kelley ed., Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) in his Introduction: “Karl Rahner “An Outline of His Life” 1.

<sup>5</sup> Milton, “Epistle,” CD YP, VI: I.121.

<sup>6</sup> Rahner, Hearer of the Word 70, 71, 75.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Talon “Editor’s Introduction,” Hearer of the Word (New York: Continuum, 1994) xv. Andrew Tallon notes that we have the single most accessible and necessary book of philosophy and pre-theology Rahner ever wrote. [ . . . ] It is the sine qua non of Rahner studies. [ . . . ] Hearer of the Word is a contemporary classic, the best key to understanding Rahner’s omnia opera, and his single best effort to show how the human spirit in the world can hear the word of the Spirit who enters history” xix.

Note also that at the heart of Rahner’s theodicy or philosophy of religion lies an understanding of a person’s three-fold act of consciousness—cognition, affection, and volition. Translators maintain and preserve Rahner’s use of Vorgriff, a German word meaning “anticipation” as that which “makes cognition possible (along with the other two modes of consciousness, affection and volition.”) Introduction to Hearer of the Word, xiv. As Rahner explains it, Vorgriff is the mind’s anticipation that in knowing a singular object, a single being within the mind, an implication exists or an anticipation of the limitlessness of being “as unlimited in itself” 50. Rahner insists that “the Vorgriff toward being as such in its essential infinity belongs to the basic makeup of human existence”

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(50). In other words, philosophically Rahner sets up the possibility of man's ability to be open to the Being of all beings, God Himself, through knowing singular beings, exactly what Milton depicts through plot, characterization and dialogue in his epic

<sup>8</sup> Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity (New York: Crossroad, 1984) xi.

<sup>9</sup> Rahner, Foundations 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> See entry for "transcendent" in Random House College Dictionary, Revised Edition (New York: Random House, 1984) 1394.

<sup>11</sup> Rahner, Foundations 20. See also Richard P. McBrien Catholicism (New York: HarperCollins, 1994) where he agrees with Rahner that theology has used the transcendental method since the time of Thomas Aquinas, but modern and postmodern philosophy have given the method "a new and stronger impulse." McBrien, offering additional insight on transcendence, comments on the process of transcendence: "For Rahner the a priori condition (i.e., the condition that must be present before any other if there is to be any knowledge of God at all) is grace, which is the presence of God in the knowing subject. In other words, the human person is capable of transcending himself or herself in the knowledge of God, to whom his or her whole life is oriented, because God is already present in that person as the transcendent force or condition which makes such knowledge possible" [emphasis is McBrien's] 146.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Rahner, "Dilemmas in the Modern Church," Nature and Grace (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963) 96.

<sup>13</sup> Stanley Fish, "Preface," Surprised by Sin 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997) lxxi, and 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Fish, "Preface," Surprised x.

<sup>15</sup> Iser 152.

<sup>16</sup> Iser 152.

<sup>17</sup> Fish, How Milton Works 123.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Shore, "Fit though Few: Eikonoklastes and the Rhetoric of Audience," Milton Studies 45, ed. Albert C. Labriola (Pittsburgh, 2006) 135.

<sup>19</sup> John Milton, "Of Education," John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Macmillan, 1957) 631.

<sup>20</sup> William V. Dych, S. J. "Theology in a New Key," A World of Grace, ed. Leo J. Donovan (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown UP, 1995) 8-9.

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- <sup>21</sup> James F. Bresnahan, "An Ethics of Faith," A World of Grace, 170.
- <sup>22</sup> Richard P. McBrien, Catholicism, Revised (San Francisco: Harper, 1994) 167, and Stephen J. Duffy, The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology (Collegeville: Liturgical P, 1993) 126.
- <sup>23</sup> Duffy 126.
- <sup>24</sup> Robert C. Holub, Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction (New York; Methuen, 1984) 39-40; 40.
- <sup>25</sup> Holub 26.
- <sup>26</sup> Paul de Man, "Introduction," Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, Hans Robert Jauss (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) ix.
- <sup>27</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised ed. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004) 292.
- <sup>28</sup> Gadamer 293. Gadamer quotes Heidegger from Being and Time (153) about the hermeneutic circle. Heidegger also notes: "It [the hermeneutic circle] is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing, and we genuinely grasp this possibility only when we have understood that our first, last and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves" 269.
- <sup>29</sup> Gadamer 293-294.
- <sup>30</sup> Gadamer 296.
- <sup>31</sup> See Anthony Flew, A Dictionary of Philosophy, Revised 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984) 267.
- See also Diane Collinson, Fifty Major Philosophers (New York: Routledge, 2004) explains phenomenology in more detail: "Its aim is to indicate and describe the data of immediate experience just as they are, without superimposing organizing concepts upon them and without abstracting from them. From the phenomenological point of view, the world is the condition we engage with and inhabit; it is constitutive of our lives. [. . .] Heidegger writes of the human 'encountering' of the world and of the 'mood' in which we encounter it as placing a value on the world. . . . in the sense of inhabiting our own perspectives on life and using what we find around us, and this is our facticity. He speaks also of each person's appropriation of the world, and the understanding that one can attempt to become and do what one envisages rather than be carried along by the

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surge of events. But his very engagement with the life of the world produces a tension between one's self-realisation and the unthinking communal practices of the 'they' of the world. I can become depersonalized, an object for the use of others, by succumbing to the mechanical habits and conventions of everyday existence, conforming to what is average, unsurprising and often banal. Heidegger describes such a person as the 'anonymous one,' a human being alienated from her or his true self" 152.

Interestingly, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) taught Rahner, and Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) taught Heidegger. Edmund Husserl's research assistant was Edith Stein, the Jewish Carmelite nun gassed 9 August 1942 at Auschwitz and canonized by Pope John Paul I on 11 October 1998. Henry Bordeaux writes in Edith Stein: Thoughts on Her Life and Times (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1959) that "she made notable contributions to phenomenology of which she had learned the method from her master, Edmund Husserl. So wholehearted and brilliant a disciple had she become that Husserl considered her the philosopher who best understood his thought" v.

Cecily Hastings and Donald Nicholl who translated the 1953 biography by Sr. Teresia de Spiritu Sancto, O.D.C of Edith Stein (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1952) write: "Husserl's practice was to think stenographically, i.e., to write down his trains of thought in his own shorthand." When Edith Stein accepted the position as his assistant in 1917, "tens of thousands of shorthand manuscripts lay waiting "for her "to transcribe and interpret, and to introduce some sort of arrangement into them" (59). One of Stein's assistants was a young Martin Heidegger. According to the wife of Adolf Reinach, one of Stein's philosophy professors and Husserl's "right-hand man" at Gottingen, "no one knew so well as Edith how to find her way quickly around these mountains of manuscripts and, with the expert's sure eye, dig out hidden treasures. She found things there which Husserl had once laboured at and then long since forgotten, but whose importance she at once recognized" 59.

<sup>32</sup> See Karl Rahner, Hearer of the Word (New York: Continuum, 1994). Joseph Donceel, S.J., in his "Translator's Preface" notes that for his dissertation in philosophy Rahner reworked ideas of Joseph Marechal, fellow Jesuit and the Father of Transcendental Thomism, who taught that man "implicitly" affirms God's existence by every act of his intellect and will and, in fact, has by nature a relationship to the Absolute (vi).

<sup>33</sup> Mark L. Taylor God as Love: A Study in the Theology of Karl Rahner, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 6.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor 6.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor 26.

<sup>36</sup> The manifestation of spirit in the world that Rahner investigated may occur for readers or listeners in all disciplines, depending on content and context. For example, the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1849-1941) posits a vital principle, the élan vital, a creative life force or basic energy, that grounds reality but produces variations surging within nature. In Creative Evolution he goes so far as to identify the élan vital with God,

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an interesting point that could also help interpret the creative expression of poets and artists.

<sup>37</sup> Rahner, Foundations 75.

<sup>38</sup> Rahner, Foundations 11.

<sup>39</sup> Rahner, Foundations 20.

<sup>40</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, where he defines horizon as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of the narrowness of horizons, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth. Since Nietzsche and Husserl, the word has been used in philosophy to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy and the way one’s range of vision is gradually expanded. A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him. On the other hand, “to have a horizon” means not being limited to what is nearby but able to see beyond it. 301. Gadamer continues to explore horizon in terms of the hermeneutical question. See 302-306.

<sup>41</sup> Dych 9.

<sup>42</sup> Dych 9.

<sup>43</sup> Dych 9.

<sup>44</sup> Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, Peter Brooker, “Reader-Oriented Theories,” A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory (New York: Prentice Hall, 1997) 63.

<sup>45</sup> Rahner, Foundations 11.

<sup>46</sup> See Iser 30-32.

<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth Freund, The Return of the Reader (New York: Methuen, 1987) 135.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer, eds. Literary Criticism 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998) 171.

<sup>49</sup> Flew 228.

<sup>50</sup> Holub 1.

<sup>51</sup> Selden, A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory, 53.

<sup>52</sup> Selden, A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory 53.

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<sup>53</sup> M. H. Abrams, "Reception-Theory," A Glossary of Terms, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999) 262-263.

<sup>54</sup> Davis and Schleifer 171.

<sup>55</sup> Davis and Schleifer 171.

<sup>56</sup> Iser, The Act of Reading 158.

<sup>57</sup> Iser, The Act of Reading 158.

<sup>58</sup> Iser, The Act of Reading 28.

<sup>59</sup> Iser, The Act of Reading 34.

<sup>60</sup> I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism (New York: Harcourt, 1929) 23. Cited by Richard Beach in A Teacher's Introduction to Reader-Response Theories (Urbana: NCTEA), 1993, 16. When I read Practical Criticism, I did not find the reference as Beach cited it. However, since Beach embeds his citation within the context of what Richards had asked his Cambridge students to accomplish, I am assuming that he omitted or transposed a page number.

<sup>61</sup> Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, New Revised Edition (New York: Harcourt), 1956) 147.

<sup>62</sup> Beach, A Teacher's Introduction 16.

<sup>63</sup> Beach 8-9

<sup>64</sup> Stanley E. Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" first appeared in New Literary History Vol. II (1970)123-62. Fish also included it as the first chapter of Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretative Communities. In Self Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth Century Literature (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1994) Fish reprinted "Literature in the Reader" as an Appendix. Fish states in a footnote to the latter text "although I would no longer stand behind its every statement, it is here reprinted in full, except for a small section on the Phaedrus" 383.

<sup>65</sup> Fish, Artifacts 406.

<sup>66</sup> Fish, Artifacts 407.

<sup>67</sup> Stanley E. Fish, Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretative Communities (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980) 12-13.

<sup>68</sup> Fish, Text 13.

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<sup>69</sup> Fish, Text 158.

<sup>70</sup> Fish, Text 158-159

<sup>71</sup> Fish, Text 161.

<sup>72</sup> Fish, Text 161-162.

<sup>73</sup> Fish, Text 165.

<sup>74</sup> Fish, Text 165.

<sup>75</sup> Fish, Artifacts 1-2.

<sup>76</sup> Fish, Artifacts 3.

<sup>77</sup> Fish, Artifacts 3.

<sup>78</sup> Fish, Artifacts 21.

<sup>79</sup> Fish, Artifacts 4.

<sup>80</sup> See Fish, Surprised by Sin where he explains further: “The “centrality to Milton’s thought of monism cannot be overestimated. Not only does it generate an account of evil, it dictates (a) an epistemology (all things are truly known in their relation to God), (b) a definition of heroism (a hero is someone loyal to God no matter what form, including inaction, that loyalty might take), (c) a morality (in any situation of choice the moral choice will always be the one that maintains fidelity to the creator), (d) an erotics, (love for the world and its creator cannot be separated from, or opposed to, love of God), (e) a politics (act in any crisis so as to align yourself with the will of God, (f) a prescription for happiness (“That thou are happy, owe to God; / That thou continu’st such, owe . . . / . . . to thy obedience.”[’sic] 5.520-2), (g) an aesthetics (words and images are truly beautiful only when they either praise God’s goodness or signify a submission to his will), and above all (h) a theory of value (since everything proceeds from God, everything is intrinsically valuable and nothing is to be rejected as if it were, in and of itself, the bearer of evil and error; this includes snakes, apples, trees, minerals, wine, women, and song) xix-xx.

<sup>81</sup> Fish, “Preface,” Surprised by Sin xxi.

<sup>82</sup> Fish, How Milton Works 23.

<sup>83</sup> Fish, How Milton Works 567.

<sup>84</sup> Fish, Artifacts 3- 4.

<sup>85</sup> Fish, Is There a Text in this Class? 2-3.

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<sup>86</sup> Fish, Text 3.

<sup>87</sup> Fish, Text 7.

<sup>88</sup> Fish, Text 8.

<sup>89</sup> Fish, Text 10-11.

<sup>90</sup> “Introduction,” Is There a Text in this Class? 10-11 Fish clarifies that “the quotation marks indicate that ‘he’ and ‘makes’ are not being understood as they would be under a theory of autonomous individual agency” 10, 10,11, 11.

<sup>91</sup> Fish, “Preface,” Surprised x.

<sup>92</sup> Fish, “Preface” to the First Edition of Surprised by Sin lxxi.

<sup>93</sup> Fish, Surprised 1.



# Chapter VI

## The Economics of Salvation in Paradise Lost

**Overview:** Chapter VI has three sections that consider additional issues concerning the reader. Issue three considers PL as an epic experienced as a drama enacted within a reader's mind. With issue four, the possibility that PL becomes a means for a reader to reflect on matters of grace, responsibility, and salvation, I discuss grace as a conversation between reader and text. Additionally, I look at PL as it returns the reader to a sacred time and a sacred place. Issue five, the "higher Argument" of PL that a reader discovers upon reflection includes the economics of grace and salvation. To situate Milton as a theologian, I mark the importance of CD and its relationship to PL, review the qualities of the Puritan sermon that Milton incorporates into PL, and note Milton's debt to Puritan homilists. Finally, I look into biblical economics and how Milton incorporates an economics of grace into his "higher Argument."

Of concern in this chapter is not just a reader surprised by grace rather than surprised by sin as Stanley Fish argues but the instruction of readers in the economics of salvation and grace by Milton's characters who depict the wages of sin or the wages of virtue, or who interpret action to move a reader into more faith-filled living. A succession of disciplines—psychology, anthropology, sociology, phenomenology—also study the relationship of faith for an individual, but PL holds a unique place within a discipline because it anticipates scholarship in its interest in the reader and the meaning of the Divine in one's life, culture, and experience. The text creates for the faith-filled reader a re-enactment of a sacred time, the beginning of creation, and a sacred place—the Garden—that allows readers to participate vicariously in their beginning in time and place and thus to learn of the sacredness of life. Underlying my interest in the reader lies the problem of how reading PL affects a faith-filled reader, one's recognition of a "higher Argument" in the epic, and an awareness that the poem challenges the reader to expand the bubble of consciousness on

three levels in addition to the poetic—the theological, moral, and personal. The issues covered in this chapter relate closely in that while reading the epic the reader may simultaneously understand that the text lives as a drama in the mind, realize the saving effects of grace, experience a moment of transcendence, and perceive the “higher Argument” of PL. C. S. Lewis explains the epic as an encounter, if only momentarily, with the Divine, for “in the religious life man faces God and God faces man. But in the epic it is feigned, for the moment, that we as readers, can step aside and see the faces both of God and man in profile.”<sup>1</sup> The epic challenges the reader to discover both faces in the course of reading.

### **Issue Three: Epic-Drama for Mind and Spirit**

This section examines the reader-text experience as a drama enacted mentally by the reader that enables one to return to a period of innocence, disobedience, and exile in a dramatic re-enactment of Genesis. Although Milton first conceived PL as a tragic drama, it is not a drama but an epic with dramatic elements. Roy Flanagan sees “tragedy within the epic,”<sup>2</sup> while C. S. Lewis observes that it is Milton’s “cosmic story—the ultimate plot in which all other stories are episodes” where readers “are invited, for the time being, to look at it from the outside”<sup>3</sup> as if in a theater. Merritt Hughes thinks that “a reader coming to Paradise Lost for the first time, and going rapidly through it to the end of Book X [Hughes must have the first edition in mind], is likely to get the impression he is reading drama. It is a heightened kind of drama which is too big for the stage and too rich for it in poetic perspectives around the conversations and debates that take up more room than the narrative does.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, for Hughes “a series of dramas” contained within the epic form the plot of PL. Milton prays to his muse for an audience of few but fit readers: “Still govern thou my song, / Urania, and fit audience find, though few” (7. 30-31). His very choice of “audience”

indicates that he saw his epic as dramatic in the world of God's theater. Merritt Hughes rejects that PL is drama, but "it is an epic built out of drama" since "its plan is epic."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when a drama becomes too complex for a stage, it assumes proportions that only a mind can grasp as it copes with the long narrative nature of epic by reading, that is, for example, its beginning on the "ever-burning Sulphur" lake (1.69) after the revolt and defeat of the angels and its return later in the epic to their original rebellion and defeat by the Son. Stanley Fish with his emphasis on the reader argues that "Milton's method is to re-recreate in the mind of the reader (which is finally, the poem's scene) the drama of the Fall, to make him fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity, that is to say, 'not deceived.'"<sup>6</sup> Many scholars, then, understand PL as an epic that draws the reader into its action as if in the theater of the mind so that PL becomes a personal epic drama in which the reader actively participates.

Milton's Adam, mankind's representative, in these episodes or series of dramas poetically raises existential issues such as obedience, rebellion, and sin with his angelic instructors who offer advice and solutions. C. S. Lewis states that the issues PL enacts depict "the objective pattern of things, the attempted destruction of that pattern by rebellious self love, and the triumphant absorption of that rebellion into a yet more complex pattern."<sup>7</sup> Thus, Adam learns from Michael what the destructive forces of his disobedience will cause. For that reason, Michael encourages a wiser and repentant Adam and his descendants to cultivate an inner garden—Georgia Christopher's "Portable Garden"<sup>8</sup>—to cope with desolation or anguish generated by sin or forces of doubt. Through dialogue Milton plants seeds of hope for readers of the last three Books, hope that spring from the mulch of human misery, as does the Protevangelium or "first gospel" that occurs in Genesis when the Lord

God comes to the garden to pronounce sentence on Adam and Eve with the first promise of Redemption.<sup>9</sup> In one sense, the epic has a comedic ending rather than a tragic one in light of the “felix culpa” that leads to the Protevangelium. Additionally, the descriptions of the Edenic garden where the human action occurs in PL, the setting for readers, “are there not to give us new ideas about the lost garden but to make us know that the garden is found, that we have come home at last and reached the centre of the maze—our centre, humanity’s centre, not some private centre of the poet’s.”<sup>10</sup> In the garden of their minds readers meet their ancient relatives and re-live their crises.

For his plot, Milton reaches into Scripture with the Genesis myth that carries polarities of good and evil, light and dark. On a journey from garden into wilderness, the first man and woman artlessly communicate with their Creator and nature around them, but lose that openness and freedom with the Divine by disobedience. Consciously, but more often unconsciously, every reader—i.e., everyman and everywoman, the counterparts of Adam and Eve—work out in their ordinary lives hope of salvation and redemption. Milton presents PL as an epic-drama of creation for the mind, imagination, and heart of readers so that they experience Adam and Eve’s relationship with God, one another, Satan, the angels, and all creation to illuminate the mystery and grace present in the ordinariness of a reader’s life. The epic challenges the reader to question what the Genesis myth has to say about a relationship to the Divine, creation, and existence itself, while the dramatic form created by Milton enables the reader to re-live the first experiences of Adam and Eve as they unfold before the reader’s imaginative eye/I. By reading the twelve books, the reader enacts literarily but also dramatically man’s and woman’s original experience of divinity, humanity, innocence, and order when no institutions or governments control society but only God’s

will, grace, and right reason prevail until Adam and Eve sin. With disobedience, Adam and Eve lose a sense of integration, experience exile, and yearn for a return to that original experience. Implicit in Raphael's and Michael's instruction is the call to holiness for Adam and Eve and their progeny through obedience to the law of God by right use of reason and free will, the two faculties that are always in potency for God to act upon by the gift of grace, or Himself. Both the Trinity Manuscript, where Milton set forth his ideas for a tragedy, and Kerrigan's Prophetic Milton, where he notes that the epic "is a prophetic vision in dramatic form dictated by a divine power,"<sup>11</sup> support my argument that PL is a mental epic-drama whereby Milton re-creates a primal beginning and an original call to holiness for his readers.

#### **Issue Four: The Reader and the Grace Conversation**

Issue four examines the idea of grace present within PL and what this means for the reader. If PL is an epic drama of the mind, it may also be conceived as a conversation or a dialogue between the reader and the text or the reader and poet—an additional example about the importance of relationships for the epic reader. The reader may consider PL as epic in dialogue between reader and text, instructor (Milton) and student (reader), or cleric (Milton as priest-poet) and congregation (fit readers). If a conversation ensues, it ultimately continues with reader and the Divine alone. The poet and text having served their purposes withdraw. The reader's involvement in the conversation about grace in PL draws on the nature of grace outlined in Chapters III and IV but also bears a relationship to the philosophical and anthropological shift toward the subject (Chapter V) found in contemporary disciplines as emphasis again tilts to the person, the recipient of grace. The philosophical turn to the subject grounds reader-response theory, and permits Stanley Fish to assert that the epic as a drama occurs in a reader's mind.<sup>12</sup> By reading the epic as Fish says a

reader does, the reader experiences a fall when Adam and Eve disobey, rages with them at each other, and realizes his or her own guilt in their sin. Yet, the reader who admits wrongdoing with Adam or Eve feels the “stony” leaving his or her heart. The reader, too, experiences grace and perhaps what Milton means by the “higher Argument” in the Proem to Book IX. Through the realization of this “higher Argument,” the reader engages the text on another plane —the plane of salvation and sanctification. One cannot forget Milton’s awareness that PL requires “fit” readers on many levels, literary, moral, and scriptural. The reader enters a conversation about grace and salvation with self/text/author, albeit only passively, until he or she actively engages with the reality revealing questions about existence, relationships, sin, and ultimately radical guilt, the “all our woe” that confronts humanity as a reader surprised by sin also confronts the reality of grace. Stanley Fish’s argument that “Milton’s purpose is to educate the reader to an awareness of his position and responsibilities as a fallen man”<sup>13</sup> has relevance in the dialogue between reader/text and reader/Divine (i.e., grace). Only after the jolt of sin, the sundering of the relationship with the Divine, the realization of sin, mercy, and grace does the reader perceive how radically destructive sin is to one’s humanity and how restorative grace is to personal integrity.

To enable his readers to choose God rather than Satan as their fundamental option, I find that Milton offers PL first, as an epic drama that readers re-live as they read his epic account of the Book of Genesis, but second, offers PL as a biblically based sermon wherein he propounds an economy of grace. The twelve books of the epic act as a literary moral manual to remind the reader of the points of a Puritan sermon by giving the reader the contents for a conversation with text/author. Whether the reader conceives the epic as a didactic drama with its roots in medieval mystery and morality plays, or reads it as a Puritan

sermon in the tradition of William Ames and William Perkins, Milton propounds an economy of grace, redemption, and salvation throughout the epic. Every book is necessary for his argument about the importance of right reason and choice for salvation. Hence, those who would highlight certain books or find Books XI and XII a waste miss the point of Milton's tight argument, a "higher Argument" embedded within PL to instruct the reader about the one thing necessary.

Milton's self-definition recorded in RCG reveals his choice of pen rather than pulpit to inculcate virtue into his countrymen. Milton sees himself involved with the sacred as RCG and PL attest. John Shawcross recognized a quarter century ago that "more than any other literary work outside the Bible, John Milton's Paradise Lost continues to be read as religious document."<sup>14</sup> Milton as the creator of the epic "associates himself with the archetypal creator, God. The poem we read is Milton's creation, a similitude of God's creation; because of its subject matter he functions as a surrogate of God for man to 'repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright.'"<sup>15</sup> In fact, Shawcross sees the entire epic as a sermon with Milton as minister teaching his congregation of readers.<sup>16</sup> Keep in mind that Milton believes that the "one certain source of the knowledge of truth" exists in Scripture; yet, he is no "narrow literalist." Milton, "in exalting scripture," follows "the lead of Protestant reformers in general and of the Puritan preachers in particular"<sup>17</sup> that the right or duty of private scriptural interpretation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit exists for individual Christians. Milton himself teaches that nature comprises the other scripture given to man to know that heaven "Is as the Book of God before thee set, / Wherein to read his wond'rous Works, and learn / His Seasons, Hours, or Days, or Months, or Years" (VIII. 67-69). Consequently, if a reader may view PL as a sermon preached by a poet-priest, or a

didactic epic re-created for his/her understanding, so too may the reader understand the epic as a seventeenth-century moral manual reminding one of epic events as he/she enters into dialogue with its author about eternal verities.

In perhaps Milton's last declamation at Cambridge, Prolusion 7: Learning Brings more Blessings to Men than Ignorance, he foreshadows themes of PL—creation, man's spirit, and the primacy of intellect over will—implying right reason. He explains that “the great Creator of the world, infused into man, besides what was mortal, a certain divine spirit, a part of Himself, as it were, which is immortal, imperishable, and exempt from death and extinction.”<sup>18</sup> Later in the oration, he summarizes faculty psychology, especially the function of the intellect, which he calls “the king and governor” that “gazes upon the doings of the Will below as some object lying far beneath her feet; and thereafter for evermore she claims as her right all excellence and splendor and a majesty next to that of God Himself.”<sup>19</sup> An early indication of his use of Right Reason in PL (6.42) occurs within the same paragraph:

it is, I believe, an established maxim of philosophy that the cognisance (sic) of every art and science appertains to the Intellect only and that the home and sanctuary of uprightness is the Will. But all agree that while the human Intellect shines forth as the lord and governor of all the other faculties, it guides and illuminates with its radiance the Will also, which would else be blind, and the Will shines with a borrowed light, even as the moon does.”<sup>20</sup>

The traditional faculty psychology Milton receives from St. Augustine, the scholastics, and Calvin indicate in this Prolusion the philosophical curve his poetry would take.

Readers, as they re-live the creation, temptation, Fall, and restoration of Adam and Eve, confront in the epic and in themselves these two faculties of the soul—the intellect or right reason and free will—both critical in a person's growth toward wholeness, integrity, and holiness. Understanding these two powers or faculties of the soul is necessary for what Milton requires of his characters and his readers. What these powers of the soul do and are



drawn to—the intellect whose proper object is truth (i.e., the intellect in its operations of knowing, judging, and reasoning cannot be happy with error but only with the truth of things) and will whose proper object simply as will is universal good which means that only a last end of happiness can satisfy man—have important roles in Milton’s epic for Adam, Eve, and readers. Fish teaches that “Milton’s method is to re-create in the mind of the reader (which is, finally, the poem’s scene) the drama of the Fall, to make him fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam’s troubled clarity, that is to say, ‘not deceived.’”<sup>21</sup> In the Preface to the Second Edition of Surprised by Sin, Fish calls the epic “a drama of choice”<sup>22</sup> with the reader presented the philosophy of Satan’s world with its own ontology, epistemology, politics, and aesthetics<sup>23</sup> Acts of the intellect, right reason directing prudent choice, lie at the heart of PL since woe occurs when right reason succumbs to temptation and chooses a lesser good.

The will in its attraction to universal and particular good affects choice which always selects a good or what appears good to the person. The “good” may in reality be an evil for the person, but the person conceives the evil as a good, as Eve does in choosing to eat the fruit, and as Adam does because of his love for Eve. In its universal aspect of desiring perfect good, the will is not free to choose not to desire good, for man is programmed for happiness, desires it, or the good, with all his/her being. Satan desiring that “Evil be thou my good” (IV. 110) is indeed a perversion of the angelic nature’s orientation to good. Consequently, only a universal or supreme good, not a lesser good, can satisfy the will’s desire for happiness/good. The will, however, when concerned with particular goods has the power of free choice, a voluntary activity, and in that choice achieves its proper object, that is, choosing “the means to the end,”<sup>24</sup> a choice concerned with a particular good not universal good. The will therefore can be attracted to something that it perceives as good and

that satisfies a need for happiness only particularly. The Divine alone satisfies the will completely.

Right Reason, as Milton calls the intellect intuitively guided by conscience,<sup>25</sup> directs free choice by steering the will which traditional philosophy and Milton refer to as a blind faculty. Free will includes a free decision that St Augustine calls “*liberum arbitrium*” (free choice),<sup>26</sup> but literally may mean any decision, judgment,<sup>27</sup> that is, a judgment of reason guiding acts of the will involving free choice. For this reason, freedom, a property of human will also enters into a definition of person. The responsibility to use choice correctly is not a transient event but an ever developing conscious awareness of possessing oneself as a distinct, accountable person aware of one’s actions and being. Responsible use of choice or an act of free will is a life-long process by which a person determines himself/herself as always accountable. Hence, Milton’s term Right Reason (6.42) covers not only a particular decision but the lifelong orientation of a person or of an angelic being that the Father alludes to in “I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (3.98-99).

Raphael teaches Adam the use of right reason prior to the Fall through narrative and command. The perceptive reader questions the use of reason and will when she sees that the rebellious angels “who reason for thir Law refuse, / Right Reason for thir Law, and for thir King / Messiah, who by right of merit Reigns” (6: 41-42). Then, she hears Adam warn Eve with the instruction he had from Raphael (5.520-540) and that God first articulated in 3.96-128:

But God left free the Will, for what obeys  
Reason, is free, and Reason he made right,  
But bid her well beware, and still erect,  
Lest by some fair appearing good surprised  
She dictate false, and misinform the Will  
To do what God expressly hath forbid (9.351-6).

Seen either as a didactic epic or an instructive sermon, Milton incorporates the best of psychology, philosophy, and theology in the dialogue between Adam and Eve in responsible use of their powers of soul. Once they fail, they are ready for lessons in grace.

The concept of grace permeates PL from beginning to end. The reader cannot escape the reality of grace either in its absence from the fallen angels, its presence in the prelapsarian couple, its lack in fallen man and woman, and its presence again through their humble repentance. Each book of the epic speaks to the effects of a deficiency and of the importance of grace. In fact, by Book XII the reader learns that a relationship exists between grace and salvation. Christ says to the Father in Book III

Man shall find grace;  
And shall grace not find means, that finds her way,  
The speediest of thy winged messengers,  
To visit all thy creatures, and to all  
Comes unprevented, unimplor'd, unsought?  
Happy for man, so coming; he her aid  
Can never seek, once dead in sins and lost;  
Atonement for himself or offering meet,  
Indebted and undone, hath none to bring:  
Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life  
I offer, on mee let thine anger fall;  
Account mee man (3. 227-238).

Christ, the price of mankind's salvation, earns redemption for humanity through "Obedience imputed" (3. 408-409), and in "his satisfaction" on the cross he pays the ransom that redeems man from death (3. 424). What Adam and Eve lose through disobedience, Christ regains for man by obedience.

In Surprised by Sin Stanley Fish demonstrates to readers how they re-create the original sin of Adam and Eve through assumptions and interpretations they make as they read. Furthermore, readers experience the moral instruction of Raphael warning of

temptation and the effects of disobedience, experience the effects of prevenient grace in Adam and Eve at the beginning of Book XI, and experience the tragic expulsion of “our first parents”(4.6) by Michael from Paradise. The narrator even lets readers hear Milton’s adaptation of a Divine dialogue concerning sin, liberty, and redemption between Father and Son prior to man’s fall. The Father admits that man “shall find grace” (3.132), “Some I have chosen of peculiar grace” (3.183-184), and to having implanted “Umpire Conscience” (III.195) as man’s guide. When the Son replies that “man shall find grace / And shall grace not find means, that finds her way. . .” (3.227-228) is not a reader as surprised by grace as of sin? What happens to a reader confronted by the vatic words of Milton? In reading the printed word, can the reader of a tertiary epic in interior silence meet the Living Word as St. Paul affirms one does who hears the Word preached in a Hebreo-Christian aura-oral culture, a culture described by Walter Ong that continues long into the print and technological communities in which we live? Ong believes so, especially in the presence of person to person where “a presence is an interiority bearing toward and calling to another interior. [. . .] It calls not to something outside, but to the inwardness of another. It is a call of one interior though an exterior to another interior”<sup>28</sup> The reciprocity of person to person becomes “the matrix in which the sense of God’s presence grows for the present day man of faith,” where, “for believers, the increased sense of human presence enjoyed by man today is thus filled with promise.” Ong teaches us that “the word evolves not merely into intersubjectivity but also into reflectiveness,” giving a person more self-awareness, self-possession, and identity in our “new oral age.” Additionally, Ong holds that “the word remains for us at root a mystery, a datum in the sense-world existing in closest association with that other mystery which is understanding itself.” In noting that “the word of God comes to man and is present

among men within an evolving communications system,”<sup>29</sup> Ong would agree that the words of PL may prepare the reader to accept the mystery of the Word Divine.

I suggest that just as the reader may be surprised by sinful attitudes that reading reveals, as Fish argues, so too the perceptive reader moves with Adam and Eve from a sinful state to one of repentance, and then of wonder and awe in the experience of grace. In fact, faith-filled, the reader is surprised by the lightness of being that is grace. Fish makes a distinction between “plot thinking” wherein one revises a story frequently and “faith-thinking” wherein the plot remain the same—obedience to God—and he relates these two types of thinking to the politics of short joy, such as Adam demonstrates in Book XI when he mistakes a false marriage for a true one (XI.611-616), or the politics of long joy wherein “the meaning of things and events is foreknown (meanings are never new); what is not known is the specific and often surprising form this unvarying phenomena must surely have and the meanings they at first appear to have that the work, at once interpretative and political, is done.”<sup>30</sup> Reading PL from a faith perspective includes faith thinking since the reader is open to all possibilities that grace reveals in reading.

### **The Grace Conversation Occurs in a Sacred Place and during a Sacred Time**

This section continues reflection on grace and reader but expands it to suggest that with a dramatic reading and recognition of grace the reader appreciates Milton, as a minister of the Word. He calls “fit” readers and educates a congregation of readers, to perceive a “higher Argument,” a phrase that Milton deliberately mentions in the prologue to Book IX of PL (9.42), the book where his main characters fail. The “higher Argument” embedded in the epic challenges the perceptive reader to recognize either the obedience necessary to live in the kingdom of God or the disobedience necessary to inhabit the realm of the fallen angels.

At any point in reading, because of his transcendent spirit<sup>31</sup> and the expansion of one's mental horizon that occurs while mind, imagination, and emotions engage a text, a reader always has the potential of meeting the living God through the text and may thereby be touched by grace. On the other hand, possibilities exist that a reader may miss opportunities embedded in the text, such as with difficult reading, a tiresome author, an interruptive narrator, or misunderstood characterization.

Reading PL places readers at the point where philosophy, theology, and poetry intersect, in an immediate, original experience of creatureliness in a sacred place, Eden, at the center of the known world where heaven, earth, and underworld meet—the navel of the earth as Mircea Eliade describes it.<sup>32</sup> In this immediate, original transcendent experience, readers, if they are aware and open, may meet the Divine. Did Milton intend this? Perhaps he did so, but would that response not border on the intentional fallacy? I suggest an affirmative response since Milton deliberately chooses the ministry of the word, the work of the poet, over that of the pulpit. When a reader engages PL carefully, the moment of reading allows the reader to experience various forms of the sacred because the epic has the potential to awaken what Rudolph Otto in The Idea of the Holy calls the divinizing faculty in man, a faculty I see as nothing more than the intellect touched by the Divine or by grace.

The epic takes readers into the heart of the creation myth with the formative principle of sacred space and sacred time. Herein I draw upon the scholarship of Mircea Eliade's The Sacred and the Profane to situate PL in what Eliade refers to as in principio, in the beginning. A reader experiences what Milton envisions our grand parents encounter in illo tempore, at that time, and in principio, in the beginning, before and after their disobedience. Eliade explains that where God began to create the world, called the navel of the earth, “the true

world is always in the middle, at the Center, for it is here there is a break in plane and hence communication among the three cosmic zones” where whatever “it represents is always perfect,” that is, it becomes “an imago mundi.”<sup>33</sup> Eliade remarks that “creation implies a superabundance of reality, in other words an irruption of the sacred into the world.”<sup>34</sup> In fact, even every human building or institution “recreates the creation of the world from a central point (the navel), just as God created the first man and woman “at the navel of the earth” because their creation “is a replica of the cosmogony.”<sup>35</sup> Eliade teaches “life is not possible without an opening toward the transcendent; in other words, human beings cannot live in chaos.”<sup>36</sup> Homo religiosus, (religio in itself carries a variety of meanings: religious awe, reverence, integrity, sanctity, but religiosus means a person strict in religious observance or conscientious [in matters of observance])<sup>37</sup> “can live only in a sacred world because it is only in such a world that he participates in being, that he has real existence,” as Eliade explains, for such a need “expresses an unquenchable ontological thirst. Religious man thirsts for being.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Milton creatively makes Paradise the sacred meeting place of the major characters of three cosmic zones with Satan the invader of the Garden created by God for Adam and Eve, and here the Divine walks and talks with his handiwork. In his epic, Milton awakens for his reader, who may be or may become homo religiosus, a “profound nostalgia” or a “desire to live in a pure and holy cosmos, as it was in the beginning, when it came fresh from the Creator’s hands.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, in creating a sacred space such as Paradise for the action of his epic, Milton makes his literary world a sacred place that his reader also inhabits from the beginning, in principio, of his reading the epic. Milton, thus, gives readers an opportunity to return imaginatively to a primal spot where they can experience creation as if the reader experiences his or her own unique creation in the image of the Divine.

Homo religiosus has a need to remember not only a sacred place but also a sacred time. The concept of sacred time allows religious man and the reader of PL to return periodically to the beginning of the “mythical moment of Creation.”<sup>40</sup> Eliade traces the importance of time for a religious and a profane society. Profane time is “ordinary temporal duration,” continuous time, without religious significance, while “sacred time is reversible in the sense that properly speaking it is a primordial mythical time made present.”<sup>41</sup> Through sacred time man, then, may return to a primitive, primordial time when a particular sacred event occurred. Religious events held annually or periodically recreate for man such “a sacred event that took place in a mythical past.”<sup>42</sup> Eliade explains that “it is the nostalgia for the perfection of beginnings that chiefly explains the periodical return in illo tempore.”<sup>43</sup> In PL Milton provides a text that re-recreates both sacred place and sacred time, at the beginning, (in principio) of creation of the universe, of the earth, and of humanity to give the reader the opportunity to return as often as he/she wishes to the beginning of all life in illo tempore. In Paradise in illo tempore, at that time or sacred moment, the reader is present both in a sacred place and at a sacred time to re-live through the text and reflectively in one’s own life both the tragedy and the hope of mankind.

As a re-creation of sacred place and sacred time, PL challenges readers to value the integrity of all creation not only on individual, interpersonal, and infrastructural levels of being but also confronts them with the possibility of moral growth, of spiritual change, and of transcendence of being in relationship with the Divine. The text speaks to their minds and spirits when an interaction with the levels of the text occurs.

How a person defines or explains the concept of God orients or distances one from the Divine. Milton never mentions Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), a mystic and Lutheran



known as the German philosopher, who acquired influence and admiration in seventeenth-century England. Yet, Milton and Boehme share comparable ideas that indicate a Neoplatonic and biblical cultural context for the similarity of their thought that wafts through London during Milton's lifetime. For example, Boehm holds that "God's love is in men even before they search for him" as well as that "the visible world is a manifestation of the interior spiritual world."<sup>44</sup> Certainly, the reader of PL could make a case that Milton translates Boehm into poetry. The question of who God is for man is central in the history of thought. Whether one accepts, rejects, or disregards God, one does ultimately face the question of God, even stands before the reality it suggests. Michael J. Buckley reflects that "God is given as the orientation of the mind when it moves through nature in its drive for truth—the truth that is the coherence of nature and the satisfaction of the mind. Nor is it the case that the mind moves toward mystery and infers that it is real. Rather the mind moves toward reality and finds that it is finally and radically mystery"<sup>45</sup> is a statement that explains Adam's search for an understanding of his creation and its remembrance in dialogue with Raphael. Thus, Buckley explains, "God is the orientation of the mind when it is geared to ultimate reality and to the final truth about the world."<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, Eve heeds not what Adam tells her of the wiles of Satan, while Adam rejects the light of right reason and the warnings of Raphael. They both enter into a state of disobedience and alienation from God that only humiliation, repentance, and grace can change.

#### **Issue Five: The "Higher Argument" of PL**

Although C. S. Lewis finds the last two books of Paradise Lost "inartistic" and "an untransmuted lump of futurity, coming in a position so momentous for the structural effect of the whole work," he notes that with Books XI-XII "there are fine moments, and a great

recovery at the very end.” Yet, Lewis remarks that the “dry and cumbrous periods” of scriptural history that Milton covers may be the result of Milton’s “hieratic manner” or the “heresies” to which he subscribed.<sup>47</sup> He believes “Milton’s talent temporarily failed him” so that “these last books bore only a superficial resemblance to that of his epic prime.”<sup>48</sup>

I take another viewpoint. PL is a didactic text written with the Puritan homiletic style in mind. Every book carries a necessary component of Milton’s argument. I contend Milton offers PL first as an epic drama that readers re-live as they read the text, and second as a biblically based sermon wherein he propounds an economy of grace, redemption, and salvation by weaving both epic text and the sermon sub-text into an artistic whole to encourage readers to choose God rather than Satan, the kingdom of heaven rather than the reign of Satan. The epic text then acts as a moral manual for the reader who refers to it just as Puritan scribes often returned to the points of a sermon. PL offers readers a critical opportunity in the responsible exercise of freedom. A reader sees this distinction only upon reflection. Scholars or readers who would highlight certain books or find Books XI and XII superfluous miss the point of Milton’s tight argument. The entire epic speaks to the issue of an economics of grace and what its absence portends for the salvation of man. From the depiction of Satan, his council with the other fallen angels in Pandemonium, his journey to seduce Adam and Eve, his strategies to deceive angels and humans, the awareness of God of Satan’s actions and intentions, the instructions of Raphael in Books V-VIII and of Michael in Books XI-XIII, Milton instructs his reader in the intrigues of Satan and the opposing measures of God so that the reader grasps and understands the nature of evil and grace.

To this end, I first note the relationship of Milton’s epic with its theological counterpart, CD. Maurice Kelley holds that “De doctrina should be decisive in any question

of interpreting Milton's epic," for his scholarship contends that while Milton dictated PL, he also supervised revisions for his theological treatise, so that, in "the chronology of Milton's writings, the close proximity of the two works justifies the assumption that their theology is the same."<sup>49</sup> In other words, according to Kelley, "both texts, in the end, argue the same thesis: the justice of the Providence of God."<sup>50</sup> Kelley argues that chronologically Milton worked on both PL and CD simultaneously. More precisely, Jeremy Picard, Milton's amanuensis, made a fair copy of the treatise "ca.1558-ca.1660—just before or during the period when Milton was dictating Paradise Lost."<sup>51</sup> Kelley agrees with J. H. Hanford that "the Picard draft of the De doctrina stood complete not later than the early years of the Restoration."<sup>52</sup> Kelley concludes his chapter on "The Picard Manuscript and Its Revisions" by noting the close proximity in time to both CD and PL but also recognizes the theological bond that exists between them:

If the revisions followed immediately after the Picard draft, they were made while Milton continued his composition of the epic. If they were added during Milton's last years, they testify to the static nature of his views between ca.1658-ca.1660 and 1667. In either case, then, we should presume not only that the De doctrina is closely associated with Paradise Lost but also that in matter of theological detail the treatise can and should be freely used in the interpretation of the epic.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, both texts complement each other so that the epic reflects the theology and the theology makes clear the epic.

If Milton presents an economics of grace and salvation within the epic, then the theological prose of CD should support that reality, which in fact it does. For example, Milton asserts in "OF JUSTIFICATION" that Christ "paid the price" for our salvation. "We receive his righteousness, imputed to us, as a gift. We pay nothing for it, we merely have to believe" complements the Son's argument in PL to "account mee man" as he offers himself

an “offering meet,” and “that debt paid” for “indebted” man (3.234-246). Milton concludes this paragraph of CD by noting “there could not be a simpler or more equitable method of satisfaction.”<sup>54</sup> Note the use of economic terms in both CD and PL to explain a theological reality of redemption. Additionally, in “OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE” (I.XXVI),” Milton discusses the covenant of grace “first made public from God’s point of view “in Genesis 3: 15 when God pronounces sentence on Satan, of course quoted in PL as the Protevangelium.<sup>55</sup> In “OF RENOVATION AND ALSO OF VOCATION” (XVII), Milton observes that because of Christ “the price of redemption which he has paid is sufficient for all mankind.” Moreover, “everyone is called to share in that grace although everyone may not know how the grace is given.”<sup>56</sup> In “OF THE GOSPEL AND CHRISTIAN LIBERTY” (I. XXVII), Milton refers to the Gospel as “the new dispensation of the covenant of grace.” In the previous chapter (XXVI), he cites John 1.17 observing “that the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth are present through Jesus Christ,”<sup>57</sup> but in Chapter XXVII Milton stresses that “the gospel produces grace” since the law of grace replaces the law of works, in fact the “whole law.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the economics of salvation and grace present in PL have a theological foundation in CD. (Even Milton’s Sonnet XIX (1652?), “On His Blindness,” indicates an economic thread in his mind as the poet recalls the parable of the talents (Matt. 25.14-30) and questions his fit response to the account God asks of the talents Milton has received).

While scholars argue about the genesis of CD, their discussions shed light on the doctrinal content of PL. In his “Epistle” to CD Milton himself explains the origin of the text, a two stage process as argued by Maurice Kelley.<sup>59</sup> As a boy, Milton read both Testaments “in their original languages, and then proceeded to go carefully through some of the shorter

systems of theologians,” listing “under general headings” scriptural passages “which suggested themselves for quotation.” During Kelley’s stage two, Milton read “diffuse volumes of divinity” studying “conflicting arguments in controversies,” but disappointedly found “that the authors frequently evaded an opponent’s point in a thoroughly dishonest way, or countered it, in appearance rather than in reality, by an affected display of logical ingenuity or by constant linguistic quibbles.”<sup>60</sup> Kelley’s two stage process for the composition of CD begins when Milton in stage one undertakes the study of classical languages to study both Testaments

in their original languages, and ended with his perusal of certain shorter systems of divinity and his institution of a commonplace book, where following their example, he collected under general headings scriptural passages that might prove useful on later occasions. The second stage Milton initiated with his study of more voluminous treatises and their discussions of certain disputed heads of faith; and his own systematic theology grew out of his disappointment with these works.”<sup>61</sup>

Both Milton and Kelly recognize only two stages in the formation of CD. Milton’s lifelong interest in scripture and theological interpretation explain how naturally PL would lend itself to characteristics of the sermon style exhorting readers to a relationship with their Creator.

Edward Phillips, Milton’s oldest nephew, gives corroborating evidence of what would become CD. He mentions in his Life of Milton (1694) that while he lived with his uncle, Milton worked on a systematic theology. Phillips notes that his uncle’s Sunday procedure consisted in “for the most part, the reading each day a chapter of the Greek Testament, and hearing his learned exposition upon the same . . . . The next work after this was the writing from his own dictation some part, from time to time, of a tractate which he thought fit to collect from the ablest divines who had written on that subject: Amesius, Wollebius &c., viz, A perfect System of Divinity. . . .”<sup>62</sup> In 1967, Maurice Kelley argued that “A perfect

System” subsequently becomes what Milton called De Doctrina Christiana.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, Kelley analyzes the first two chapters of CD to establish that Milton draws on both Ames and Wolleb to suggest that “A perfect System” originally contains scriptural passages cross referenced in his Commonplace Book that Milton called “Index Theologicus,” so that “we can trace the De Doctrina—as Milton does—to a single work, where the theological topics were collected from ‘Amesius, Wollebius, &c.’” Kelley believes that Milton in his early years “produced two works, now lost, on religion.”<sup>64</sup> The one referred to in the 1640’s was the “Index Theologicus” that Kelley sees as a “companion to the Ethical, Economic, and Political Indexes that make up his extant Commonplace Book. Its known headings suggest that Milton derived notes from non-biblical sources, was concerned with temporal aspects of the church, and contributed little if anything, to the completed De Doctrina. The second work,” what Phillips named “A perfect System of Divinity,” was so complete that Phillips “could call it a ‘Tractate,’” while the “title indicates that it was not a notebook . . . but a systematic theology.”<sup>65</sup> As noted previously, Milton himself describes a two stage process for the development of CD in his Epistle, Edward Phillips confirms that Milton worked on such a preliminary text during the 1640’s, while Kelley in the twentieth century links CD to Phillips “A perfect System” that support Milton’s two stage process by corroborating Milton’s indebtedness to Ames and other Reformed divines. In fact, scrutiny of theological texts gives Milton a familiarity with both theological arguments and homiletic style.

### **PL: A Puritan Sermon**

As mentioned above, John Shawcross recognizes that PL has value for many as a “religious document” and that Milton, creator of the epic, associating himself as a “surrogate” to the Prime Creator God, gives readers “a similitude of God’s creation” so that

Shawcross views the entire epic as a sermon with Milton as minister teaching his congregation of readers.<sup>66</sup> Indebted to Reformed divines, steeped in his own system of theology, and involved in the seventeenth-century conflicts of religion with politics and culture, Milton possesses a familiarity with sermon style. In RCG (1642) he understands his poetic talent, “the inspired gift of God,” as related to “the office of the pulpit.” Milton sees himself called to teach his countrymen through the pulpit of literature. Hence with John Shawcross and Jameela Lares, I argue that Milton writes his great epic with the Puritan sermon style in mind adding to their dialogue my footnote that the text serves as a reminder to the points of the sermon with Milton himself furnishing the reader with the argument for each of the twelve points he makes. In other words, the reader may view the epic text as a poetic religious document, a seventeenth-century sermon, and a moral manual with each book functioning as a point in the sermon, all so dear to the heart of Puritans and in a sense a complement to CD. Shawcross notes the didactic nature of “the sermon which is the epic Paradise Lost,” with Milton as its “minister.”<sup>67</sup> Lares places PL within the seventeenth-century homiletic tradition and argues that Milton in his RCG declaration “had something more in mind when he claims that the poetic office parallels that of the pulpit, and that here he is actually aligning his poetic program with the preaching arts.”<sup>68</sup> Lares sees Raphael and Michael as “types of preachers and their discourses to Adam are sermonic in form, Michael’s particularly so.”<sup>69</sup> Undeniably, Milton lives in a culture instructed by sermons, obsessed with self examination of behavior, and critically suspicious of another religion or sect.

Jameela Lares finds the roots of the Puritan sermon in classical rhetoric. Milton’s effective rhetorical skills derive from what Renaissance scholars had recovered, understood, and reinterpreted from the classical era.<sup>70</sup> Sermons, a form of “persuasive discourse,” grew

out of the study of rhetoric devised by Aristotle in his Rhetoric, Cicero in De Inventione, Topica, De Oratione, and Quintilian in Institutio Oratoria that continued into the Renaissance often influenced by the logic of Peter Ramus (1515-1572).<sup>71</sup> About the thirteenth century, “late in the history of rhetoric,” according to Lares, the art of preaching, or artes praedicandi from Latin meaning the art of preaching, developed which taught the construction of sermons and saw the formation of preaching manuals.<sup>72</sup>

Lares defines seven types of sermons common during the seventeenth century. Andreas Gerardus Hyperius (1511-64), a prolific Lutheran theological author, reformer, and scholar of Flanders whose death Reformers such as Beza mourned, wrote De formandis concionibus sacris (1533), which John Ludham translated in 1577 as Of Framing of Divine Sermons, argues that a particular scriptural passage could serve five ends: doctrine, reproof, instruction, correction, and consolation.<sup>73</sup> Clergymen had five types of sermon styles available for any one scriptural passage if they followed the preaching manual of Hyperius/Ludham. Four of the types he finds mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that every one who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” Hyperius finds support for the consolation sermon in St. Paul (Rom. 15:4): “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.” Lares observes that “as much as Hyperius insists that his homiletic theory agrees with the Scriptures and with the practice of the early church fathers, his division into five sermon types is probably his own innovation.”<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, Philip Melanchthon, a Lutheran scholar who wrote the Augsburg Confession and who systematized Luther’s work, notes two other



types of sermons in his De officiis concionatoris. Melancthon simplifies the sermon types by recognizing the “didactic” sermon that teaches doctrine and the “adhortative” sermon that persuades one to accept doctrine. However, he divides the adhortative type into the sermon that leads one to believe, the “epitreptic,” and the sermon that urges moral behavior, “the paraenetic.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, the homilist had seven sermon types available: (1) the consolatory, (2) corrective, (3) doctrinal, (4) instructive, (5) the epitreptic, (6) paraenetic, and (7) the redargutive, the sermon that reproves false doctrine or engages in controversy.<sup>76</sup> Of these types, Milton uses only the consolatory and the corrective in PL.<sup>77</sup>

Lares develops a line of tutors at Christ’s College, Cambridge, from William Perkins to William Chappell who influenced students who in turn became influential in the pulpit. Laurence Chaderton, known for the holiness of his life and the quality of his homilies, taught Perkins, Perkins taught William Ames, and Lares “suspects”<sup>78</sup> that Ames taught Chappell “who enjoyed a dazzling reputation as a scholar and controversialist” and was Milton’s tutor until in “disagreement with Chappell” Milton took Nathaniel Tovey as tutor.<sup>79</sup> Both William Perkins and William Ames, therefore, exert influence on Milton.

William Perkins (1558-1602), graduate of Christ’s College (Milton’s college), studied under Puritan Laurence Chaderton (1536-1640) who modeled for Perkins forceful preaching and holiness of life. Perkins, author of The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience and other treatises concerning questions of conscience, also wrote The Art of Prophesying that Lares holds “was perhaps the most influential preaching manual ever written by an Englishman”<sup>80</sup> and delivered sermons that touched scholars and simple folk. Milton knew his style, could cite Perkins, and could argue against his arguments.<sup>81</sup> Perkins’s interest in formulating a “practical divinity” in moral matters of “Protestant casuistry” surely influences

Milton in the structure of PL whereby to attract and instruct his readers in matters of conscience.

Additionally, William Perkins wrote a treatise that traces scriptural economics from the creation of Adam and Eve into the heart of the seventeenth-century family. In 1609 T. Pickering translated Perkins's Latin treatise Christian Oeconomie: or A Short Survey of the Right Manner of erecting and ordering a Familie, according to the Scriptures, printed by Felix Kingston of London.<sup>82</sup> The idea of Christian economics based on scriptural principles, then, must have become a commonplace during the Elizabethan period and the seventeenth century that underscore the economic problems facing the country during the Commonwealth. The family in the pew undergoing economic stress could readily identify with scriptural economic terms to describe the kingdom of heaven, such as the profit of gaining the world but losing one's soul (Matt: 8.36).

William Ames (1576-1633), also a graduate at Christ's College, studies under Perkins. Even after he left Cambridge for the parish of St. Andrew the Great, Perkins continues to influence students from Cambridge who heard him preach, especially Ames, a nonconformist Puritan.<sup>83</sup> Ames opposes Arminianism, a liberal Reformed heresy that argues for some freedom of the will and the action of grace on a person's soul, but he recognizes in their arguments truths which he incorporates into his Calvinistic theology. Indeed, for Ames "there was much that man had to do; 'spiritual preparation' was called for if grace was to be experienced."<sup>84</sup> Known also as Amesius, Ames had published his lectures given in Leyden, Amsterdam (1620-1622) as Medulla Theologica or The Marrow of Theology (1623), an explication of non-separating Puritan theology and discipline.<sup>85</sup> John D. Eusden, translator and editor of The Marrow of Theology, notes that "Ames, almost alone in the orthodox party,

found that the Remonstrant insistence on man's response in the drama of salvation was a needed corrective for Reformed theology." Like Perkins, he also addresses moral questions in De Conscientia supplying Puritans with a moral manual that Reformed Churches needed. Milton's "so-called" Arminianism, then, links him to a few theological positions of Ames.

Phillips corroborates that Milton read Ames. Kelley in the Introduction to CD notes Milton's debt to Ames but also to other Reformed theologians.<sup>86</sup> Even in the structure of their texts a similarity exists between Milton and Ames. Ames organizes The Marrow of Theology into a theological system of two books each simply entitled Book One—an exposition of fundamental theology: Christology, sacramental theology, and eschatology—and Book Two, a moral treatise addressing the duties of a Christian to God and neighbor. Milton divides CD, his "dearest and best possession,"<sup>87</sup> into two books with the first book "Of the Knowledge of God" and the second "Of the Worship of God." Ames offers a Dedicatory Epistle "To the pious and benevolent merchants" giving the names of eleven men who support "poor youths intending to enter the holy ministry," whereas Milton, moving beyond Ames, addresses his treatise to "All the Churches of Christ and to All in any part of the world who profess the Christian Faith" signifying a rather universal readership. In CD Milton certainly parallels the two-book structure of Ames. One can see in the twofold structure of Ames both a theological and moral text, another parallelism in what becomes Milton's didactic religious poem as theological and moral guide for "his fit audience . . . though few" (7.31), while in his theological text, his "dearest and best possession"—a phrase highly significant, commonplace in Milton scholarship, but perhaps overlooked—he records a lifetime of scripturally based logical study, proof texts, and reflection about matters of faith and responsibility to God and neighbor within another two-book structure. Ames treats of

grace throughout his text but especially in the chapter on sanctification just as Milton does throughout PL. However, in CD Milton covers grace under topics such as Restoration whereby Christ frees man from sin and raises him to grace and glory (XIV), Renovation that brings man to a state of grace and its presence under the law and now in the Gospel (XVII), Regeneration, the “Ingrafting” of a person into Christ (XVIII), and the Gospel that teaches the “new dispensation of the covenant of grace” (XXVII).<sup>88</sup>

Milton gives thought to the theological process whereby a person receives grace that he reflects in his epic. His explanation of the redemptive process into restoration, renovation, and regeneration indicates that he analyzes the life of grace as Ramus encourages Puritans logicians to do. PL misses the terminology and explanations of CD, but its essence occurs in the narrative as Adam and Eve experience the reality of restoration and renovation in Book X. In Books XI-XII, they learn of the promise of regeneration that Christ and Sacred Scripture offer to their descendents. If Milton were a homilist in the pulpit, he may have used theological terms. He, however, presents a homily to a congregation of readers whom he wishes to instruct as Scripture does—with a story—so that readers can reflect on the essentials of the narrative and not be lost in a theological maze of terms. Moreover, under encouragement from his publisher, Milton furnishes readers with an argument for each book that serves as a reminder of points a homilist offers hearers to follow his line of reasoning.

### **Biblical Economics**

Within the homiletic style adopted by Milton for PL, I focus on his theological-economic argument that reflects marketplace terms. I compare the choice Milton places before his reader as similar to that of a buyer in a market economy who must choose between products or goods. Often, spiritual storytellers draw hearers and readers into narratives by

way of familiarity with the marketplace. For instance, Christ tells parables, writers of Holy Scripture record Christ's sayings for posterity, and Milton creates an epic as literary re-telling of Sacred Scripture.

In other words, what Milton presents in PL about an economics of grace and salvation is nothing new. It exists in his seventeenth-century milieu. It exists in Scripture because economics is integral to survival and translates well into salvation imagery, and it exists in other literary forms such as "The Day of Doom." Michael Wigglesworth gives readers in New England a vision of judgment day where, not surprisingly, the sheep and the goats stand before the judgment seat to hear "That Christ demands at all their hands / a strict and straight account / Of all things done."<sup>89</sup> Even as new market forces work in pre- and post-revolutionary England, Milton's city enters the Modern Period that exerts its effects on everyone as Christopher Hill observes. For example, London sees a "movement, parallel to that of political revolt, against the oligarchical system of government in companies and in the City." Even Cromwell's government abandons "its former radical allies" and unites "with the men of big property"<sup>90</sup> Eventually the changes enable Adam Smith (1723-90) in The Wealth of Nations (1776) to articulate new science of economics. Surely, the economic stress Milton observes and that intrudes on his own financial situation plays out in the antagonism between just and unjust forces with PL.

### **Etymology of Economics**

One easily associates the word economics from its early use in Greece. The root word for economy comes from the Greek word for house or household or the family from whom one is descended such as "oikia" and from the verb oikeo (to inhabit, to possess, to occupy) which when formed as a noun becomes oikoumene which means the civilized world,

the whole habitable globe. Now a range of words comes from the original noun and verb such as oikonomia (the managing of a household, a family or a state, while oikonomos, a noun, refers to a steward or a housekeeper, and oikonomike refers to domestic economy). Liddell and Scott note that oikos has four levels of meaning. On level one as noun it may mean a house or any dwelling place; oikoi in the plural often stands for a single house, while a third meaning may be a temple. On level two oikos means household affairs, house-wifery, household property, house and goods. Level three suggests a household, family, while level four refers to a house, race, or family.<sup>91</sup> Level four, perhaps, would be the theological sense of economics when we think of all creation as the household of God with all persons as members in the family of God who as the householder of creation cares for humanity through his order of Divine Providence. .

We may even speak of the economics of creation that embraces all dimensions of the social structure. M. Douglas Meeks cites a similarity between theological and economic language in the use of such terms as trust, fidelity, confidence, redemption, saving, security, profit, and debt observing that “biblical God language is fundamentally economic.”<sup>92</sup> What the reader grasps is even more interesting. God as Economist enters into the organization of His Creation so that it all has value and nothing wasteful occurs in the economy of Creation. Michael H. Crosby takes a broader use of house calling readers to move beyond self to see how economics touches more than day-to-day survival. He sees the Greek word for house as entering into four economic structures of the world that touch each person: the individual (oikia), the interpersonal (oikonomia), the infrastructural (oikoumene) that comprises institutions that affect one such as healthcare, and the environmental (oikologia).<sup>93</sup> Once a reader recognizes the economic underpinning of Creation, Sacred Scripture, and society, it is

not a far stretch to understand how Milton's economic terminology develops from biblical, societal, and experiential sources.

### **Economics of Grace in PL**

The concept of grace permeates PL from beginning to end even though Milton uses the term infrequently. Milton asks his reader to understand both the epic and life in wider contexts than the pages of a text, to extract a theology of salvation and grace from the story he tells. Indeed, broadly speaking, the entire account explains the relationship between God and his creation. The reader finds a challenge to improve a relationship with the Divine and recognizes a need for assistance or grace. For example, when the reader learns how the value system of the fallen angels twists into economic perversions of materialism and imperialism as well as exploitation and manipulation of mankind, the reader may question contemporary and personal values. The reader understands that individually and collectively, Satan and his legions exhibit the worst of narcissism and vice. Certainly, the life of the Spirit with its consequent gifts and fruits such as joy and peace has no place in Hell. With that introduction into the nature of the absence of grace, the reader learns of the celestial community of accord, harmony, obedience, and self-effacing service that occur among the angels and the Divine as well as the equality between Father and Son. Lightness of being coincides with a grace-filled spirit. In the Garden of Eden prior to the great Fall, the reader discovers cheerfulness, industriousness, humility, respect, simplicity, and tranquility based on the harmony of right reason that bespeak the order of grace. After the Fall, chaos, frustration, and variations on the seven capital sins enter the garden as Adam and Eve discover life without grace. The last two books reveal a sin-filled world where certain individuals reject the corruption and sensuousness of society and opt for a life of justice by becoming grace-filled upright persons

who stand for integrity in a painfully distorted world. Milton's reader has two kingdoms before him—the kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God. The reader learns that life in a contemporary world, a community including the wicked and the just, often requires “contrition in his heart” (11.27) to regain a relationship with the Divine. Thus, as Stanley Fish asserts, the text leads a reader to experience the surprise of sin. Humbled by the enormity of sin's reality and his participation in personal or corporate sin, the reader discovers the awesome reality of grace, choosing to live by an economics of grace rather than an economics of woe. Consequently, Milton, like Scripture, offers the reader a choice between two kingdoms that involve the selling of something to have the price of admission into the kingdom. If one sells integrity for power, possessions, or prestige, one finds admission into the kingdom of Satan; if one sells power, possessions, and prestige for integrity, one finds admission into the kingdom of God.

Michael teaches Adam that the confrontation between evil and good will not be what he imagines:

Dream not of their fight,  
As of a duel, or the local wounds of head or heel . . .  
Not by destroying Satan, but his works  
In thee and in thy Seed: nor can this be,  
But by fulfilling that which thou didst want,  
Obedience to the law of God, imposed  
On penalty of death, and suffering death,  
The penalty to thy transgressions due,  
And due to theirs which out of thee shall grow:  
So only can high Justice rest appaid (12.386- 401).

In other words, the economic principles for the kingdom of heaven are not those of society such as warfare or exploitation. Instructed in divine economics of salvation by angelic pedagogy, Adam gives his interpretation for a review of the main points of the divine system:

Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,



And love with fear the only God, to walk  
As in his presence, ever to observe  
His providence, and on him sole depend,  
Merciful over all his works, with good  
Still overcoming evil, and by small  
Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak  
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise  
By simply meek; that suffering for Truth's sake  
Is fortitude to highest victory,  
And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life (12.561-571).

Milton's "higher Argument" lies exposed to the reader by the end of Book XII. Milton has given the case for angelic and human disobedience and its alternative in right reason assisted by conscience and grace. He has moved his reader away from heroic exploits on the battlefield as in earlier epics to an inner heroism of virtue and integrity found in the Just men of Scripture, especially Jesus Christ. Adam has learned the new heroism and summarizes it in two responses to Michael (12.386-401; 561-571). The epic's conclusion

The World was all before them, where to choose  
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:  
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way (12.646-649).

offers other indicators for a new heroism: dependence on Divine Providence, a point that returns the reader to the proem of Book One, and the necessity of dependence on another as well as the aloneness of the journey through the world of time.

The principles of the "higher Argument" are few as Adam summarizes them, but they form the heart of each person's quest for integrity. In rejecting the decadence of Satan and his daughter Sin, the reader chooses a life of inner heroism that translates into a choice for biblical economics of salvation and grace. Milton teaches that humanity has "under the gospel, a double scripture. There is the external scripture of the written word and the internal scripture of the Holy Spirit which He, according to God's promises, has engraved upon the

hearts of believers, and which is certainly not to be neglected.”<sup>94</sup> PL exposes the reader to the external scripture as poetry. The epic offers the reader the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to engrave Divine truth on the reader’s spirit. The Spirit of the text, the internal Gospel, informs the reader of a “higher Argument,” that is, the economics of grace and salvation inherent in inner heroism whereby the reader chooses obedience rather than disobedience, sells the false values of consumerism, power, possessions, and prestige, and buys into the Gospel values of the Beatitudes. Karl Rahner teaches that “it is perfectly acceptable to hold that human beings’ whole spiritual life is permanently penetrated by grace,”<sup>95</sup> a possibility open for any fit reader of PL.

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Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (London: Oxford UP, 1961) 132.
- <sup>2</sup> Roy Flanagan, Paradise Lost: The Riverside Milton (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) 312.
- <sup>3</sup> Lewis, Preface 132.
- <sup>4</sup> Merritt Hughes, Introduction, John Milton: Paradise Lost (New York: Prentice Hall, 1997), A New Edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003) xv.
- <sup>5</sup> Hughes xv.
- <sup>6</sup> Stanley Fish, Surprised by Sin (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967) 1.
- <sup>7</sup> Lewis, Preface 132.
- <sup>8</sup> See the title of Chapter Six in Milton and the Science of the Saints (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 175.
- <sup>9</sup> “I will put enmity between you and the / woman, / and between your offspring and hers, / he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15).
- <sup>10</sup> Lewis, Preface 51. See also Northrop Frye, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” found in Literary Criticism, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Robert C. Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998). Northrop Frye, whose interest is literary criticism, gives us another view of the epic garden in his holistic view of literature as “a vast organically growing form” [emphasis mine] that he suggests be in the image of a circle with a circumference, a centre, and a periphery with the epic closer to its “centre” and the lyric closer to the “periphery.” His use of Mathew Arnold’s title for his essay indicates that Frye acknowledges a responsibility to Arnold. “I even think that the consolidation of literature by criticism into the verbal universe was one of the things that Matthew Arnold means by culture. To begin this process seems to me the function of criticism at the present time” 49.
- <sup>11</sup> Kerrigan, Prophetic Milton 139.
- <sup>12</sup> Fish, Surprised 1.
- <sup>13</sup> Fish, Surprised 1.
- <sup>14</sup> John Shawcross, With Mortal Voice: The Creation of Paradise Lost (Lexington: U of K, 1982) viii.
- <sup>15</sup> Shawcross, Voice 1.

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- <sup>16</sup> Shawcross, Voice 4.
- <sup>17</sup> William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Harper, 1957) 349.
- <sup>18</sup> Milton, Prolusion 7, Flanagan 867.
- <sup>19</sup> Milton, Prolusion 7, Flanagan 868.
- <sup>20</sup> Milton, Prolusion 7, Flanagan 868.
- <sup>21</sup> Fish, Surprised 1.
- <sup>22</sup> Fish, Surprised xxviii.
- <sup>23</sup> Fish, Surprised xxxiii.
- <sup>24</sup> Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Q LXXXIII. a. 3. 439. Great Books of the Western World, ed. Robert M. Hutchins, vol. 19 (Chicago: Britannica, 1952) 439.
- <sup>25</sup> Willis Monie, "Reason," A Milton Encyclopedia, ed. William B. Hunter, 9 vols. (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1983) 7: 96 b-97a.
- <sup>26</sup> St. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (New York: Macmillan, 1964) 22.
- <sup>27</sup> D. P. Simpson, Cassell's Latin Dictionary (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 55.
- <sup>28</sup> Walter J. Ong, S. J., The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History (Minneapolis: U Of Minnesota P, 1981) 309, 311, 313-314, 323. Yale UP first published this text in 1967.
- <sup>29</sup> Ong 317.
- <sup>30</sup> Fish, Surprised liii.
- <sup>31</sup> See Karl Rahner, Hearer of the Word 28. "Human nature is absolute openness for all being, or to put it in one word, the human person is spirit." Milton has Satan speak of Beelzebub's former glory as "transcendent brightness (1.86).
- <sup>32</sup> Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion (New York: Harcourt, 1987) 36-39. Eliade explains that "the 'system of the world' prevalent in traditional societies: a) a sacred place constitutes a break in the homogeneity of space; (b) this break is symbolized by an opening by which passage from one cosmic region to another is made possible (from heaven to earth and vice versa; from earth to the underworld); (c) communication with heaven is expressed by one or another of certain images, all of which refer to the axis mundi: pillar (cf. the universalis columna), ladder (cf. Jacob's ladder), mountain, tree, vine, etc; (d) around this cosmic axis lies the world (= our world), hence the

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axis is located 'in the middle,' at the 'navel of the earth'; it is the Center of the World" 37. The reader will readily see similarities between Eliade's explanation and Milton's conception of exits and entrances into Paradise.

Bearing on Paradise as the center of the world, Eliade also refers to "other series of cosmological images and religious beliefs. Among these the most important are: (a) holy sites and sanctuaries are believed to be situated at the center of the world; (b) temples are replicas of the cosmic mountain and hence constitute the pre-eminent 'link' between earth and heaven; (c) the foundations of temples descend deep into the lower regions" 39.

See also Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, Classical Mythology, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Longman, 1999). For the Greeks Delphi occupied the center of the earth. "The omphalos, an archaic stone shaped like an egg, which was kept in the temple during the classical period, seems to confirm an early habitation of the site. Legend has it that this omphalos (the word means navel) signified that Delphi actually occupied the physical center of the earth (certainly it was in many ways the spiritual center of the ancient world)" 167.

<sup>33</sup> Eliade 42.

<sup>34</sup> Eliade 45.

<sup>35</sup> Eliade 44-45.

<sup>36</sup> Eliade 34. Eliade's understanding of transcendence underscores why there is need for a transcendent reader, supports Rahner, and the phenomenological necessity to define the transcendent.

<sup>37</sup> D. P. Simpson, Cassell's Latin Dictionary (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 511.

<sup>38</sup> Eliade 64.

<sup>39</sup> Eliade 65.

<sup>40</sup> Eliade 65.

<sup>41</sup> Eliade 68.

<sup>42</sup> Eliade 68-69.

<sup>43</sup> Eliade 92.

<sup>44</sup> Robert D. Richardson, Emerson, the Mind on Fire (Berkeley: UC Press, 1995), 204.

<sup>45</sup> Michael J. Buckley, "Within the Holy Mystery," A World of Grace, ed. Leo J. Donovan (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown UP, 1995) 39.

<sup>46</sup> Buckley 35.

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<sup>47</sup> Lewis, Preface 129.

<sup>48</sup> Lewis, Preface 130.

<sup>49</sup> Kelley, Argument 7.

<sup>50</sup> Kelley, Argument 8.

<sup>51</sup> Kelley, Argument 25.

<sup>52</sup> Kelley, Argument 23.

<sup>53</sup> Kelley, Argument 71.

<sup>54</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I. XXII, 486.

<sup>55</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I. XXVI, 515.

<sup>56</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I. XVII, 455.

<sup>57</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I.XXVI, 515.

<sup>58</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I.XXVII, 528.

<sup>59</sup> See Maurice Kelley, "The Manuscript," This Great Argument: A Study of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana as a Gloss upon Paradise Lost (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1962), 25-71 where Kelley refutes Arthur Sewall's three stage process for CD argued in A Study in Milton's Christian Doctrine (London, 1939). Kelley argues his own position that Milton wrote CD during two period of his life based on Milton's statements in CD and the examination of the Cambridge Manuscript with the continuous revisions that occurred in CD. "Conceived as a whole no later than ca.1658-ca.1660 and polished and improved during the following years, it stood at Milton's death as complete as any manuscript can be said to be complete before it acquires the final rigidity of print" 70.

Milton's Commonplace Book indicates that he also kept a Theological Index as a youth, but scholars have not found this document among his papers. See Ruth Mohl, John Milton and His Commonplace Book (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1969) where she gives two references to a Theological Index: 212 and 243.

<sup>60</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I. 119-120.

<sup>61</sup> Maurice Kelley, "The Composition of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana—The First Stage" found in Amadeus P. Fiore, O.F.M., ed. Th' Upright Heart and Pure (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1967) 35

<sup>62</sup> Edward Phillips, The Life of Milton, in John Milton: Paradise Lost, A New Edition, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes, (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 315.

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See also John Steadman, “De Doctrina Christiana,” A Milton Encyclopedia. Milton’s Commonplace Book indicates that he also kept a “Theological Index” as a youth, but scholars have not found this document among his papers. Steadman quotes Maurice Kelley who believes that Milton kept a Theological Index “‘concerned with temporal aspects of the church’ and based on nonbiblical sources; it would appear, therefore to have been an entirely different work from the system of divinity that Milton was preparing at roughly the same time” 2:113a.

<sup>63</sup> See Kelley and Fiore, “Composition” as noted in note 60. “Both ‘A perfect System’ and the De Doctrina, then, have close connections with the shorter systematic theologies of Amesius and Wollebius. ‘A perfect System,’ according to Phillips, was collected out of ‘Amesius, Wollebius, &c.’; . . . the De Doctrina derives much in form and content from these same theologians. Not unreasonable, therefore, would be the conclusion that the Amesius-Wollebius materials present in the De Doctrina arrived there via ‘A perfect System,’ and that ‘A perfect System’ constituted the primary version of the De Doctrina” 39.

<sup>64</sup> Kelley, “Composition” 40.

<sup>65</sup> Kelley, “Composition” 41.

<sup>66</sup> Shawcross, Voice 4.

<sup>67</sup> Shawcross, Voice 4.

<sup>68</sup> Jameela Lares, Milton and the Preaching Arts (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2001), 2.

<sup>69</sup> Lares 143.

<sup>70</sup> Lares 3.

<sup>71</sup> According to Lares, rhetoric taught ways of thinking about a topic for a speech that consisted of five parts: invention (“locating the most useful arguments”), disposition (“the most useful means for arranging these arguments”), elocution (“ways of describing the verbal and cognitive patterns of the text, often in terms whether style was intended to teach, please, or motivate”), memoria (“methods for mental storage and retrieval”), and actio (“presentation by voice and gesture”) 4.

<sup>72</sup> Another Latin word that some scholars preferred, concionandi (of making sermons) could occur in titles of manuals. For example, Andreas Gerardus Hyperius (1511-64), born Andreas Gerhard, received the name Hyperius from the city of his origin Ypres. Hyperius was a prolific Lutheran theological author, reformer, and scholar of Flanders whose death Reformers such as Beza mourned. Hyperius wrote De formandis concionibus sacris (1533) which John Ludham translated in 1577 as Of Framing of Divine Sermons. Lares speculates that “Milton may have known the ars praedicandi of Hyperius” because “Ludham’s translation was dedicated to Alexander Nowell (d.1602), a long-time dean of St. Paul’s where Milton’s school was located” 56-57..

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- <sup>73</sup> Lares 59.
- <sup>74</sup> Lares 65.
- <sup>75</sup> Lares 66.
- <sup>76</sup> Lares 98.
- <sup>77</sup> Lares 98.
- <sup>78</sup> Lares 91.
- <sup>79</sup> Lares 87.
- <sup>80</sup> Lares 91-92.
- <sup>81</sup> See Kathleen Williams "William Perkins," A Milton Encyclopedia, VI: 129-131.
- <sup>82</sup> University Microfilms International indicates missing pages 13-22, 25-26, and 121-22.
- <sup>83</sup> Lares 92.
- <sup>84</sup> Eusden, John D., ed. and trans. The Marrow of Theology by William Ames (1576-1633), (Durham NC: Labyrinth P, 1983). Reprinted by Arrangement with the Pilgrim P, Copyright 1968, United Church Press. (Originally published Boston: Pilgrim P, 1968) 7.
- <sup>85</sup> Ames's theological manual influenced generations of divinity students both in England and the American colonies. As late as 1779, students at Yale still read Ames.
- <sup>86</sup> Maurice Kelley, ed., CD, YP in note 34, VI: 107.
- <sup>87</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I. 121. See also Maurice Kelley "Milton's Debt to Wolleb's Compendium Theologiae Christianae," PMLA, Vol 50, No. 1, 1935 where Kelley notes "the same general plan and purpose as the De doctrina Christiana" as in the systematic theology of Wolleb.
- <sup>88</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I.XXVII,521.
- <sup>89</sup> Michael Wigglesworth, "The Day of Doom," American Poetry in the Seventeenth Century, ed. Harrison T. Messerole (University Park: Penn State UP, 1985) 69.
- <sup>90</sup> Christopher Hill, The Century of Revolution 1603-1714 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980) 132.
- <sup>91</sup> Lidell and Scott, A Lexicon Abridged (London: Oxford, 1993) 478.



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<sup>92</sup> M. Douglas Meeks God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 29-31.

<sup>93</sup> Lecture notes from Michael H. Crosby during a spring Peace and Justice Conference in Los Angeles (1985) and summer conferences in Orange County (1985) incorporated into House of Disciples: Church, Economics, & Justice in Matthew (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988) where he develops and enlarges on oikos/oikia. See also M. H. Crosby, Spirituality of the Beatitudes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

<sup>94</sup> Milton, CD, YP VI: I.XXX, 587.

<sup>95</sup> Karl Rahner, "Nature and Grace" 104.

# Conclusion

Although Milton writes a Protestant epic with a focus on the heroism of the ordinary person, not the heroism of a Homeric or Vergilian warrior, he recognizes that like Adam and Eve each person, in a sense, authors a personal epic in one's life by decisions of choice, heeding or ignoring direction from elders, conscience, or right reason. Because creatures/readers often miss what the self-revelation and self-communication of God holds for them, Milton writes an epic drama to recover the uniquely personal in the history of "our first Parents" (4.6) as well as to teach his erring nation what really is important about existence. Whatever the route the reader takes on a personal intellectual journey, one often questions authority found in a discipline or in a text since deep or close reading provokes thoughtful reading. A serious reader realizes that scholars in various disciplines ask similar questions—the great reality revealing questions—concerning man's mind and spirit that help a reader formulate similar questions and responses as one struggles with texts or life. Asking the right questions and finding the right method to solve the problems the questions raise reveal two human characteristics since a question always begins in wonder or anxiety, and the question discloses, if the reader is self-reflexive, a transcendent [my emphasis] horizon of the mind that pushes outward for ever more truth.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in the very act of opening oneself to transcendent values or ideas, the process itself shapes and forms the transcendent reader. If one persists in the quest, the wonderer discovers that answers ultimately link with one another for the benefit of mankind, contributing something additional to the

fabric of truth, to the economy of knowledge. Frustration lies in missing the links or in forming the wrong connections, while intellectual joy lies in discovering the relationship of ideas. Once a reader/student discovers a connection of ideas, whether through previous study or by way of life experience, that connection becomes Ariadne's thread that opens a text or life to multiple layers of meaning. The reader/student whether he or she names it or not has discovered the value of the economy of learning that ultimately allows the student to recognize similar economies in strange places such as Milton's PL.

Consequently, a reading of PL viewed within the economy of salvation and grace calls forth the best in its readers as it requires the same of its poet. Such a reading enables the reader to perceive the poet and his work in a larger schema of grace, ecumenism, and Divine purpose as he reflects on a particular literary period and works within a specific genre. C. S. Lewis long ago remarked that "poetry certainly aims at making the reader's mind what it was not before"<sup>2</sup> and, surely as Milton's epic works on the mind and spirit of its readers, they recognize both the truth of Lewis's statement and the fact that the reading in its challenges has changed them.

By reading in light of an economics of grace, the reader perceives others/mankind on the self-same journey of discovery and choice, shows the reader how to buffer the stress of life by insight, compassion, and generosity learned through reading, and perhaps encourages the reader to choose gracious living, i.e., a reliance in decision making on the gifts of grace, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the reality of Divine in others—often unnoticed, in a self-centered and frequently violent world. In other words, PL, in addition to its greatness as epic, becomes a moral manual whereby Milton teaches the reader what is really important about life. He does not want readers to fail life's exam.

What Milton in 1642 expresses in RCG about a sacred calling, Karl Rahner also articulates in a twentieth-century essay “Priest and Poet” where he states that “the union of priest and poet in one man” ranks “among the highest possibilities” of callings for a person since the word is entrusted to the poet.<sup>3</sup> The use of “word” in a lower-case recalls Word in its biblical significance in St. John’s Gospel. Rahner sees the poet as “driven on by the transcendence of the spirit.” For Rahner, a poet “is already secretly—unknown to himself—overwhelmed by the longing which the holy spirit of grace has placed in the hearts of men.”<sup>4</sup> The poet’s transcendence speaks to the spirit of the transcendent reader who hearkens to the words of the poet. Rahner also holds that “Where the word of God says what is most sublime and plunges this most deeply into man’s heart, there is also to be found a pregnant word of human poetry.”<sup>5</sup> For Milton who defines himself as poet called to exercise priestly responsibilities for his congregation of readers, Rahner’s words have special significance and highlight the sacred calling of Milton.

In another of Rahner’s essays, “The Parish Bookshop: On the Theology of Books,” he places all “religious writing” in service to Sacred Scripture: “Books have indeed made their entry into the innermost realm of the holy and salvific.”<sup>6</sup> The poet receives gift and calling, talent and vocation. Yet both imply duty and responsibility to the Giver of gifts and the receiver of his word. Scholars agree that John Milton taking much material from the epic traditions of Greece, Rome, the Renaissance, and Sacred Scripture, finds his subject from man’s disobedience in Genesis and proclaims a theological theme that intends to “assert Eternal Providence / And justify the ways of God to men” (1.25-26). PL thus takes its place among religious literature coming “into existence within the religious sphere “that Rahner recognizes when he questions whether

secular books come into the “realm of the holy,” or whether books spring “into existence within this religious sphere, with man, as homo religiosus, beginning to write and to put his writings into permanent, time defying form basically because of his desire to embody the one abidingly valid word of revelation and the demands of tradition, so that the secular book is an offspring of the sacred book?” Rahner asserts that books belong to the place where man encounters God in his self-revelation.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in PL readers may encounter the Divine because Milton’s transcendence of imaginative insight enables a reader to hear the Divine in his self-communication, to stretch the horizon of a mind beyond the narrative to its implication in transcendent uniqueness, and to discover that under every search for fulfillment, for being, and for love ultimately lies the search for the Divine. PL echoes the thoughts of the Commedia “In his will is our peace” and of the Confessions “Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.”

Rahner would reach an understanding with Milton’s theology to find his epic not merely a reflection of Reformed theology, certainly it grew out of it, but as a text belonging to mankind with ecumenical value for all religions because Milton addresses issues of being human, following right reason, responding to grace, and yearning for redemption that concern each person in the silent depths of his/her spirit. The epic speaks of the transcendence of Spirit in the world, awakens the transcendent spirit within the reader, and enables him or her to become a transcendent reader. Moreover, Rahner would find a place for PL not just in the canon of literature but within ecclesial tradition (with a small “t”) because in the epic Milton addresses phenomena that Rahner found critical in achieving the creature-Creator relationship. As Adam and Eve become aware of being addressed by God at the judgment tree after their disobedience, readers, too,

have the inner experience of grace such as Adam and Eve discover at the beginning of Book XI and the experience of self-transcendence that Adam and Eve experience before expulsion from their garden when they realize great good would come even from their disobedience—salvation for all mankind that occurs through their Descendent, Christ.

Read either in the light of the grace controversies or in the light of a grace-filled experience, PL offers the reader insight into the mystery of grace in Milton's "higher Argument." As the reader experiences PL and, perhaps, grace, he or she perceives the argument Milton offers. Choose the kingdom of heaven and find peace/integrity or choose the kingdom of Satan and find misery/frustration. Looking at grace historically and in its seventeenth-century crises suggest the possibility that Milton engages in a Post-Reformation dialogue that grows out of two major grace controversies in two different Churches earlier in century. The Arminian and De Auxiliis controversies become proximate historical events that allow him to frame his theological argument in PL. Milton wanted something more definitive than controversy for his readers. God the Father speaks about the nature of grace, free will, and conscience, while Father and Son articulate the Plan of Redemption. Milton's self-definition urges him to write of these sacred matters, while the influence of St. Augustine gives his theology of grace a foundation in tradition, and his readers, unlike readers of earlier epics, learn of spiritual heroism.

Consequently, my focus in the grace-experience of the reader reading PL has asked a primary question. What happens if the text speaks to a reader who, reflecting about God and creation and remaining open to the Divine in a transcendental experience, re-discovers what Milton sought to awaken through PL? Has the reader not experienced

a moment of grace or a grace-filled reading? I see the two—Milton offering his “great” and “higher Argument” and the reader experiencing the economics of grace and salvation—as one because Milton saw his responsibility and calling as one, as Stanley Fish reminds us,<sup>8</sup> to God and the “fit audience” whom he requested of his muse. C. S. Lewis observes that “Paradise Lost records a real, irreversible, unrepeatable process in the history of the universe; and even for those who do not believe this, it embodies (in what for them is mythical form) the great change in every individual soul from happy dependence to miserable self-assertion and thence, either, as in Satan, to final isolation, or, as in Adam, to reconciliation and a different happiness.”<sup>9</sup> Milton, educator and poet, lays out two possibilities since choice lies before the readers of PL where to choose their values and authenticity, but Providence remains their guide, directs their wandering wills, and accompanies them with their choices and on their life adventure into Eternal Reality.

. This dissertation asks a further question about a reader. How does reading Milton’s epic affect a faith-filled reader, a reader who approaches PL already formed by a scriptural and theological tradition of whatever religious denomination? I contend that a reader “surprised by grace,” overwhelmed by insight into the wonder of God’s benevolence and goodness, also reaches out like Adam and Eve to a better relationship with the Creator. By the invocation to Book IX where Milton reveals that his epic contains a “higher Argument” (9.42), the reader has learned of grace from the Father’s discourses, of redemption from the Son’s dialogues with the Father, of rebellion from Satan’s monologues, of war in heaven, of creation of the world, of the relationship of Adam and Eve from “flashback” narratives, and of the possibility of disobedience from Raphael’s warnings. The last four Books of PL teach the reader to recognize sin and

grace along with their effects in the lives of evil and good persons through the course of history. Milton gradually reveals his “higher Argument” in the epic by the sermonic instruction of Michael and Raphael. The faith-filled reader understands Milton’s argument and by reading the epic as one of choice chooses the “higher Argument” Milton presents. In other words, rather than plot thinking with its politics of short joy, as Fish defines it,<sup>10</sup> the faith-filled reader takes the long view for everything—life, salvation history, his/her historicity, crises, disasters—because faith thinking for the faith-filled reader includes trust in Divine Providence that what seems difficult, confusing, problematic, troublesome in the present, in the “Eternal now” has meaning, clarity, and purpose. Like Abraham, Noah, and Enoch, Milton calls readers to faithful obedience.



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Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The term transcendent is of critical importance throughout this essay.
- <sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (New York: Oxford UP, 1961) 54.
- <sup>3</sup> Karl Rahner, "Priest and Poet," The Word (New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1964) 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Rahner, "Priest" 25.
- <sup>5</sup> Karl Rahner, "Priest and Poet," 24.
- <sup>6</sup> Rahner, "Parish Book-Shop," Christian in the Market Place, trans. Cecily Hastings (New York: Sheed and Ward) 83.
- <sup>7</sup> Rahner, Parish, 83.
- <sup>8</sup> Stanley Fish, How Milton Works (Cambridge: Belknap P pf Harvard UP, 2001). Fish observes that "in Milton's vision all moments are the same" (492), and "what is important on any occasion is not how things have turned out (as a historian might have determined it, but whether one's inner loyalties have been maintained and strengthened" (486-7).
- <sup>9</sup> Lewis, Preface 133.
- <sup>10</sup> Fish, Surprised by Sin, Preface to Second Edition liii.

# APPENDIX 1

## Uses of Grace in Paradise Lost

Unless specified within the paragraph for each book, the following abbreviations indicate the speaker of the lines cited. (A) = Adam, (Ab) =Abdiel, (B)=Beelzebub, (D) = Death, (E) = Eve, (F) = Father, (G) = God, (M) = Michael, (N) = Narrator, (R) = Raphael, (S) = Son, (s) = Satan, (Z)=Zephon

In Book I even in the depths of hell the word grace appears twice: Satan observes that he will never “bow and sue for grace with suppliant knee (1.111-12) while the poet discerns that Satan’s malice served “but to bring forth / Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy shown / On Man by him seduc’t” (1. 218-219).

Book II has four references to forms of grace. The narrator speaks of Belial: “in act more graceful and humane / A fairer person lost not Heav’n” (2.109-110). 2. Mammon in his speech to the Synod speaks of God in a second use: “Suppose he should relent / And publish Grace to all, on promise made / Of new Subjection” (2. 237-239). 3. Sin, the “Portress of Hell” uses the term in a twisted sense: “I pleas’d, and with attractive graces won / The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft / Thyself in me they perfect image viewing” (2. 762-764). 4. The narrator describes access to the bridge between Hell to the outer orb of earth “by which the Spirits perverse / With easy intercourse pass to and fro. . . except whom / God and good Angels guard by special grace” (2..030-1033).

Milton uses grace three times in The Argument for Book III while about twelve other uses of grace occur within the third book with the Father and Son using the word grace in their dialogues. Surprisingly, Satan uses it once but only as he lies (see #15). 4. (F) “Man falls deceiv’d / By th’ other first: Man therefore shall find grace, / The other none” (3.130-132). 5. (N) “And in his face / Divine compassion visibly appear’d / Love without end, and without measure Grace” (3.140-142). 6. (S) “O Father, gracious was that word which clos’d / Thy Sovran sentence, that man should find grace” (3.144-145). 7. (F) “Yet not of will in him, but grace in me” (3.174). 8. (F) “Some I have chosen of peculiar grace” (3.183). 9. (F) “The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warn’d / Thir sinful state, and to appease betimes / Th’ incensed deity while offer’d grace” (3.185-187). 10. (F) “This my long sufferance and my day of grace” (3.198). 11. (S) “Father, thy word is past, man shall find grace” (III.227). 12. (S) “And shall grace not find means, that finds her way” (3.228). 13. (F) “So dearly to redeem what Hellish hate / So easily destroy’d, and still destroys / In those who, when they may, accept not grace” (3.300-302). 14. (A) “Father of Mercy and Grace, thou didst not doom / So strictly, but much more to pity incline” (3.401-402). 15. Satan speaks: “That if I may find him . . . / On whom the great Creator hast bestow’d / Worlds, and on whom hath all thee graces pour’d” (3.671-674).

Book IV mention grace six times but not one pertains to the essential meaning of grace as the sharing in God’s life, but subordinate or related uses occur: 1. (s) “But say I could repent and could obtain / By Act of Grace my former state” (4.93-94). 2. (N) “While universal Pan / Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance” (4.266-67). 3. (N) “For softness shee and sweet attractive Grace” (4.298). 4. (s) “So lively shines / In them

Divine resemblances, and such grace / The hand that formed them on thir shape hath poured” (4.363-365). 5. (E) “I yielded, and from that time see / How beauty is excell’d by manly grace” (4.488-489). 6. (Z) “So spake the Cherub, and his grave rebuke / Severe in youthful beauty, added grace / Invincible” (4.844-846).

Book V has only one use of grace that the narrator uses describing Adam looking at the sleeping Eve: “And beheld / Beauty, which whether waking or asleep / Shot forth peculiar graces” (5.13-15). Hughes identifies peculiar as solely belonging to Eve (113).

The use of grace occurs in Book VI once as the Father speaks to His Son: “Into thee such Virtue and Grace / Immense I have transfused, that all may know / In Heav’n and Hell thy Power above compare” (6.703-705).

In Book VII Raphael recounts creation. I found one use of grace mixed with an economic term: “And with frequent intercourse / Thither will send his winged Messengers / On errands of supernal Grace” (7.571-573).

Book VIII has a few forms of grace, but still Milton uses grace in a more general sense; it is as if Milton uses variations on the word grace in the early books until he reaches its essential meaning in Book X. 1. (N) “With lowliness Majestic from her seat, / And Grace that won who saw to wish her stay, / Rose and went forth among her Fruits and Flow’rs” (8.42-44). 2. (N) “For on her as Queen / A pomp of winning Graces waited still” (8.60-61). 3. (A) “They [food] satiate, and soon fill. / Though pleasant, but thy words [Raphael’s] with Grace Divine / Imbu’d bring to thir sweetness no satiety” (8.214-215). 4. (R) “Nor are thy lips ungraceful, Sire of men / . . . Speaking or mute all comeliness and grace / Attends thee” (8.218-222). 5. (A) “But soon his clear aspect [the Divine voice] / Return’d and gracious purpose thus renew’d” (8.336-367). 6. (A)

“Permissive, and acceptance found, which gain’d / this answer from the gracious voice Divine” (8.435-436). 7. (A) “So much delights me, as those graceful acts, / Those thousand decencies that daily flow / From all her word and actions” (8.600-602).

Only one form of grace occurs in Book IX as the narrator comments on Satan’s view of Eve: “Her graceful Innocence, her every Air / Of gesture or least action overaw’d / His Malice” (9.459-460).

Book X has six uses or forms of grace with the fifth and sixth closest to the theological sense of grace. 1. (N) “To whom / The gracious Judge without revile repli’d” (10.117-118). 2. (A) “Thy reward was of his grace” (10.767). 3. (A) “Remember with what mild / And gracious temper he both heard and judged / Without wrath or reviling” (10.1046-1048). 4. (A) “Shattering the graceful locks / Of these fair spreading tress” (10.1066-1067). 5. (A) “Hee will instruct us praying, and of Grace / Beseeching him” (10.1081-1082). 6. (A) “In whose look serene / When angry most he seem’d and most severe / What else but favor, grace, and mercy shone” (10.1094-1096).

The idea of grace as we understand it occurs five times in Book XI. 1. (N) “Prevenient Grace descending has remov’d / the stony from their hearts” (11.3-4). 2. (S) “See Father, what first fruits on Earth are sprung / From thy implanted Grace in Man” (11.21-22). 3. (M) “Sufficient that thy Prayers are heard, and Death, / Then due by sentence when thou didst transgress, / Defeated of his seizure many days / Giv’n thee of Grace, whereon thou mayest repent” (11.252-255). 4. (M) “Good with bad / Expect to hear, supernal Grace contending / With sinfulness of Men” (11.358-360). 5. (M) “Such grace shall one just Man find in his sight” (11.890).

Grace occurs twice in Book XII. 1. (M) “From shadowy types to Truth, from  
Flesh to Spirit, / From imposition of strict Laws, to free / Acceptance of large Grace”  
(12.303-305). 2. (M) “What will they then / But force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind  
/ His consort Liberty” (12.524-526).

# APPENDIX 2

## Economic Terms in Paradise Lost

Unless specified within the paragraph for each book, the following abbreviations indicate the speaker of the lines cited. (A) = Adam, (Ab) =Abdiel, (B)=Beelzebub, (D) = Death, (E) = Eve, (F) = Father, (G) = God, (M) = Michael, (N) = Narrator, (R) = Raphael, (S) = Son, (s) = Satan, (Z)=Zephon

Note that economic words or phrases are underlined.

Book I uses economic terms to describe five various procedures or items of value:

1. (s) “To do aught good never will be our task” (1.159). 2. (s) “Our labor must be to pervert that end, / And out of good still to find means of evil” (1.164-165). 3. (N) “And digg’d out ribs of Gold; Let none admire / That riches grow in Hell” (1.690-691). 4. Repeated uses of gold occur: (1.717) and golden: (1.715, 1.797). 5. (s) “Our better part remains / to work in close design by fraud or guile” (1.645-646).

Book II has three economic terms such as 1. (s) “stores” (2.175). 2. (B) “easier enterprise” (2.345). 3. (s) “Winning cheap the high repute / which he through hazard huge must earn” (2.472-473).

Book III uses economic terms to describe actions, conditions, or qualities: 1. “fraud” (3.152). 2. (F) “Once more I will renew / His lapsed powers though forfeit and enthralled / By sin to foul exorbitant desires”(3.175-177). 3. (F) “Unless for him / Some other able, as willing pay / the rigid satisfaction” (3.210-12). 4. (S) “Indebted and

undone, hath none to bring / Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life / I offer, on mee  
 let thine anger fall; / Account me man” (3.235-238). 5. (S) “Though now to Death I  
yield, and am his due / All that of me can die, yet that debt paid” (3.245-246). 6. (F) “His  
 crime makes guilty all his Sons, thy merit / Imputed shall absolve them who renounce /  
 Thir own both righteous and unrighteous deeds” (3.290-292). 7. (F) “Ransom’d with his  
 own dear life” (3.297).

In Book IV Satan uses economic terms in his soliloquy on Mount Niphates to  
 describe actions, conditions or qualities that he experiences [emphasis mine]:

Ah wherefore! He deserv’d no such return  
 From me, whom he created what I was  
 In that bright eminence, and with his good  
 Upbraided none; nor was his service hard  
 The easiest recompense, and pay him thanks  
 How due! yet all his good proved ill in me  
 And wrought but malice lifted up so high  
 I sdein’d subjection, and thought one step higher  
 Would set me highest, and in a moment quit  
The debt immense of endless gratitude,  
 So burdensome, still paying, still to owe;  
 Forgetful what from him I still receiv’d,  
 And understand not that a grateful mind  
 By owing owes not, but still pays, at once  
Indebted and discharged; (4.42-57)

Eleven other economic allusions occur in Book IV: 2. (s) “So should I purchase dear /  
 Short intermission bought with double smart” (4.101-102). 3. (s) “Divided Empire with  
 Heav’n’s King I hold” (4.111). 4. (s) “And betray’d / Him counterfeit” (4.116-117). 5.  
 (Sa) “Artificer of fraud” (4.121). 6. (N) “So clomb this first grand Thief into God’s  
 Fold” (4.192). 7. (s) “Accept your Maker’s work; he gave it me, / Which I as freely give”  
 (4.380-381). 8. (N) “And of his good / As liberal and free as infinite (4.414-415). 9. (s)  
 “Yet let me not forget what I have gain’d / From thir own mouths” (4.512-513). 10. (s)



“Whose easier business were to serve thir Lord” (4.943). 11. (G) “To dispossess him, and thyself to reign” (4.961). 12. (N) “In these he put two weights / Battles and realms” (4.1002-3).

Book V has various economic uses of work, tasks, service, and the storage of things in Paradise and Heaven, all connected to acting virtuously in some way: 1. (A) “Work of day past, or morrow’s next design” (5.32). 2. (E) “And let us to our fresh employments rise / Among the Groves, the Fountains . . . / Reserv’d from night, and kept for thee in store” (5.120-123). 3. (N) “On to thir morning’s rural work they haste” (5.211). 4. (A) “But go with speed, / And what thy stores contain, bring forth . . . / Well may we afford / Our givers thir own gifts, and large bestow / From large bestow’d, where Nature multiplies / Her fertile growth, and by disburd’ning grows / More fruitful, which instruct us not to spare” (5.313-320). 5. (R) “That thou art happy, owe to God; / That thou continu’st, owe to thyself, / That is, to thy obedience” (5.520-521). 6. (R) “Our voluntary service he requires, / Not our necessitated” (5.529-530). 7. (R) “Can hearts, not free, be tri’d whether they serve / Willing or no” (5.532-533). 8. (F) “Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls / Into utter darkness, deep ingulft, his place / Ordained without redemption, without end” (5.613-615). 9. (s) “Knee tribute yet unpaid” (5.782). 10. (s) “That we were form’d then say’st thou? And the work / Of secondary hands, by task transferr’d / From Father to his Son?” (5. 863-865).

Economic terms occur in Book VI infrequently and then mostly in terms of service. 1. (F) “Servant of God, well done” (6.29). 2. (Ab) “Unjustly thou deprav’st it with the name / Of Servitude to serve whom God ordains, / Or Nature” (6.174-176). 3. (Ab) “This is servitude, to serve th’ unwise, or him who hath rebell’d / Against th’

worthier, as thine now serve thee / Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall'd" (6.178-182).

4. (s) "Such implements of mischief as shall dash / To pieces, and o'erwhelm whatever stands" (6.488). 5. (s) "The terms we sent were terms of weight" (6.621).

Book VII, the narrative of creation, has few economic terms. 1. (F) "He trusted to have seiz'd, and into fraud / Drew many" (7.143-144). 2. (R) "He took the golden Compasses, prepar'd / In God's Eternal store" (7.225-226). 3. (R) "The great Creator from his work return'd / Magnificence, his six days' work, a World" (7.567). 4. (R) "The Filial Power arriv'd, and sat him down / With his great Father, for he also went / Invisible, yet stay'd . . . and the work ordain'd / Author and end of all things, and from work / Now resting, bless'd and hallow'd the Sev'nth day, / As resting on that day from all his work" (7.587-592). 5. (R) "Great are thy works" (7.602).

In Book VIII Adam tells his history to Raphael. Economic usage abounds. 1. (A) "What thanks sufficient, or what recompense / equal have I to render thee, Divine / Historian" (8.5-6). 2. (A) "I oft admire / How Nature wise and frugal could commit / Such disproportions with superfluous hand" (8.25-27). 3. (R) "And calculate the Stars, how they will wield / The mighty frame, how build, unbuild, contrive / to save appearances" (8.80-82). 4. (R) That bodies bright and greater should not servre / The less not bright (8.87-88). 5. "More plenty that the Sun that barren shines, / Whose virtue on itself works no effect, / But in the fruitful Earth" (8.94-96). 6. (R) "Or save the Sun his labor" (8.133). 7. (R) "If Earth industrious of herself fetch day" (8.137). 8. (A) "For while I sit with thee, I seem in Heav'n / . . . from labor, at the hour / Of sweet repast" (8.210-214). 9. (R) "To see that none thence issu'd forth a spy / Or enemy, while God was in his work" (8.234). 10. (Presence Divine to A) "This Paradise I give thee, count it

thine / To Till and keep, and of the Fruit to eat: / Of every Tree that in the Garden grows /  
 Eat freely with glad heart; fear here no dearth” (8.319-322). 11. (A to Author of  
 Universe) “And all this good to man, for whose well being / so amply, and with hands so  
liberal / Thou hast provided all things” (8.361-363). 12. (A to Creator) “Giver of all  
things fair, but fairest this / Of all thy gifts” (8.493-494). 13. (R) “Weigh with her  
 thyself / then value: Oft-times nothing profits more / Than self-esteem grounded on just  
and right / Well manag’d” (8.570-573).

Book IX has economic terms concerned with work. 1. (s) “For only in destroying  
 I find ease / To my relentless thoughts; and him destroy’d, / Or won to what may work  
 his utter loss / For whom all this was made” (9.129-132). 2. (s) “I in one Night freed /  
 From servitude inglorious well nigh half / Th’ Angelic Nation” (9.139-141). 3. (N)  
 “Then commune how best that day they best may ply / Thir growing work: for much thir  
work outgrew / The hands’ dispatch of two Gard’ning so wide” (9.201-203). 4. (E) “Our  
 pleasant task enjoin’d, but till more hands / Aid us, the work under our labor grows, /  
Luxurious by restraint” (9.207-209). 5. (E) “Let us divide our labors” (9.214). 6. (E)  
 “Our task we choose . . . Our day’s work brought to little, though begun early, and the  
 hour of Supper comes unearn’d” (9.221-225). 7. (A) “Well thy thoughts imploy’d / How  
 we might best fulfil the work which here / God hast assign’d us” (9.229-231). 8. (A)  
 “For nothing lovelier can be found / In Woman, than to study household good, / And  
good works in her husband to promote” (9.232-234). 9. (A) “For not to irksome toil, but  
 to delight / He made us” (9.242-243). 10. (A) “Somewhere nigh at hand / Watches, no  
 doubt with greedy hope to find / His wish and best advantage . . . / To other speedy aid  
 might lend at need (9.256-260). 11. (E) “To us, in such abundance lies our choice”

(9.620). 12. (s) “The Gods are first, and that advantage use / . . . For this fair Earth I see / Warm’d by the Sun producing every kind” (9.718-722). 13. (E) “But if Death / Bind us with after-band, what profits then / Our inward freedom” (9.760-762)? 14. (N) “Greedily she ingorg’d without restraint” (9.791). 15. (E) “The fertile burden ease / Of thy full branches offer’d free to all” (9.801-802). 16. (N) “She gave him of the fair enticing Fruit / with liberal hand” (9.997-998).

Book X offers a variety of economic terms (32) that give insight into the theology behind the biblical story. 1. (F) “I told ye then he should prevail and speed / On his bad Errand” (10.40). 2. (F) “Both Ransom and Redeemer voluntary” (10.61). 3. (G) “I miss thee here / Not pleas’d, thus entertain’d with solitude, / Where obvious duty erewhile appear’d unsought” (10.104-106). 4. (A) “And gav’st me as they perfect gift, so good” (10.138). 5. (Sin) “Let us try / Adventurous work . . . A Monument / Of merit high to all th’ infernal Host, / Easing the passage hence, for intercourse / Or transmigration, as their lot shall lead” (10.254-261). 6. (Death) “Nor shall I to the work thou enterprisest / Be wanting, but afford thee equal aid” (10.270-271). 7. (N) “Forfeit to Death” (10.304). 8. (Sin) “Thine now is all this World, they virtue hath won / what thy hands builded not, thy Wisdom gain’d / With odds what War hath lost (10.372-374). 9. (s) “Chiefly on Man, sole Lord of all declar’d / Him first make sure your thrall, and lastly kill” (10.401-402). 10. (s) “My hold of this new Kingdom all depends / through Sin to Death expos’d by my exploit” (10.406-407). 11. “Reduc’t in careful Watch / Round thir Metropolis” (10.439). 12. (s) “Plebian Angel militant / Of lowest order, pass’t” (10.442-443). 13. (N) “Ascended his high throne, which under state/ Of richest texture spread, at th’ upper end / Was plac’t in regal lustre” (10.445-446). 14. (N) “With what permissive glory since his

fall / Was left him, or false glitter” (10.451-452). 15. (s) “Now possess / As Lords, a spacious World” (10.466-467). 16. (s) “But I / Toil’d out my uncouth passage” (10.474-475). 17. (s) “Fame in Heav’n / Long had foretold, a Fabric wonderful / Of absolute perfection . . . Man” (10.482-483). 18. (s) “Both his beloved Man and all his World, / To Sin and Death a prey, and so to us, / Without our hazard, labor, or alarm, / To range in, and to dwell, and over Man / To rule” (10.489-493). 19. (s) “A World who would not purchase with a bruise, / Or much more grievous pain? Ye have th’ account / Of my performance” (10.500-502). 20. (N) “This annual humbling certain number’d days, / To dash their pride, and joy for Man seduc’t, However some tradition they dispers’d / Among the Heathen of thir purchase got” (10.576-579). 21. (Death) “Which here, though plenteous, all too little seems / To stuff this Maw” (10.600-601). 22. (Sin) “The Scythe of Time mows down, devour unspar’d, / Till I in Man residing through the Race, / His thought, his looks, words, action all infect. / And season him thy last and sweetest prey” (10.606-609). 23. (F) “See with what heat these Dogs of Hell advance / To waste and havoc yonder World” (10.616-617). 24. (N) “They with labor push’d / Oblique the Sun’s Axle” (10.670). 25. (A) “What can I increase / Or multiply, but curses on my head” (10.731-732)? 26. (A) “It were but right / And equal to reduce me to my dust. / Desirous to resign, and render back / All I receiv’d, unable to perform / The terms too hard, by which I was to hold / The good I sought not. To the loss of that, / Sufficient penalty” (10.747-753). 27. (A) “These terms whatever, when they were propos’d: / thou didst accept them; wilt thou enjoy the good, / then cavil the conditions” (10.757-759). 26. (A) “Be it so, for I submit, his doom is fair” (10.769). 28. (A) “Fair Patrimony / That I must leave ye, Sons; O were I able / To waste it all myself, and leave ye none! / So disinherited

how would ye bless / Me now your Curse” (10.818-822)! 29. (A) “That burden heavier than the Earth to bear” (10.835). 30. (A) “But strive / In offices of Love, how we may light’n / Each other’s burden in our share of woe” (10.960-961). 31. (A) “I fear lest Death / So snatcht will not exempt us from the pain / We are by doom to pay” (10.1024-1026). 32. (A) “And wee / Instead shall double ours upon our heads” (10.1039-1040).

Book XI uses economic terms ten times that continue the theology of economics imbedded within the myth. 1. (F) “And send him from the Garden forth to Till / The Ground whence he was taken, fitter soil” (11.97-98). Michael repeats these lines (11.260-261). 2. (E) “But the Field / To Labor calls us now with sweat imposed” (11.171-172). 3. (E) “I never from thy side henceforth to stray, / Where’er our day’s work lies, though now enjoin’d / Laborious, till day droop” (11.176-178). 4. (M) “All the Earth he gave thee to possess and rule / No despicable gift” (11.339-340). 5. (M) “But this preeminence thou has lost, brought down / To dwell on even ground now with thy Sons” (11.347-348). 6. (A) “Earn rest from labor won” (11.375). 7. (M) “But the bloody Fact / Will be aveng’d, and th’ other’s Faith approv’d / Lose no reward” (11.457-459). 8. (M) “Where luxury late reign’d . . . Depopulation” (11.751-756). 9. (M) “Those whom last thou saw’st / In triumph and luxurious wealth, are they / First seen in acts of prowess eminent / And great exploits, but of true virtue void” (11.787-790). 10. (M) “Who having spilt much blood, and done much waste / Subduing Nations, and achiev’d thereby / Fame in the world, high titles, and rich prey, / Shall change thir course to pleasure, ease, and sloth, / Surfeit, and lust” (11.792-796).

Book XII contains ten economic terms. 1. (A) “Wretched man! What food / Will he convey up thither to sustain / Himself and his rash Army” (12.74-76)? 2. (M) “And

upstart Passions catch the Government / From Reason, and to servitude reduce / Man till then free” (12.88-90). 3. (M) “Not wand’ring poor, but trusting all his wealth / With God” (12.133-134). 4. (M) “Choosing rather / Inglorious life with servitude” (12.219-220). 5. (M) “Some blood more precious must be paid for Man” (12.293). 6. (M) “A long succession must ensure, / And his first Son for Wealth and Wisdom fam’d” (12.332). 7. (M) “They first re-edify, and for a while / In mean estate live moderate, till grown / In wealth and multitude, factious they grow” (12.350-352). 8. (M) “Proclaiming Life to all who shall believe / In his redemption, and that his obedience / Imputed becomes theirs by Faith, his merits / to save them, not thir own” (12.407-410). 9. (M) “To reward / His faithful, and receive them into bliss” (12.461-462). 10. (M) “For teachers, grievous Wolves, / Who all the sacred mysteries shall turn / Of lucre and ambition” (12.508-510).

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